

# WAY TO MAKE INDIAN VILLAGES 'SMART'

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In 1975, Ralegan Siddhi, a village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, was one of the many villages of India plagued by acute poverty, deprivation, a degraded ecosystem and unemployment. Then one of its resident - Anna Hazare, retired from army and returned to his native place. Hazare inspired the villagers to come together and improve the watershed management. He campaigned against alcoholism and castism prevalent in the village. Today Ralegan Siddhi is a rich and prosperous village. The unique thing is that this prosperity was achieved through community efforts only with little or no external support. Ralegan Siddhi has become a role model for all villages in India. It's a clear example of how a community can make its life better through cooperative and collective efforts.

This example illustrates the role of people's participation in development. Governments alone cannot do everything. Community also needs to take responsibility and initiatives. This thinking is behind Government's model village scheme 'Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana' (SAGY). This article is an effort to study various aspects of this scheme and evaluate its performance so far.

## Idea Behind Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

As mentioned in case of Ralegan Siddhi, some Gram Panchayats have shown exceptional achievement in integrated local development, mainly due to inspiring leadership and collective action. However many difficulties and challenges were faced by these people in the process. So it was thought to create an institutional mechanism where this collective action by community be nurtured and promoted. Government aspires to achieve this through SAGY.

India has around six lakh villages and 23,8,617 Gram Panchayats'. It would take huge amount of resources if government were to develop all these villages. Instead a strategy is devised in which some villages should be developed as model villages through community participation and remaining villages should be encouraged to emulate them in a competitive spirit.

Launching the scheme on October 11, 2014, the Prime Minister of India said-

"One of the biggest problems for us has been that our development model has been supply-driven. A scheme has been prepared in Lucknow, Gandhinagar, or Delhi. The same is attempted to be injected. We want to shift this model from supply-driven to demand driven through Adarsh Gram. There should be an urge developed in the village itself."

The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, unlike other Schemes, does not look at the beneficiaries as receivers and the Government as the doer. The *Yojana* aims to empower the villagers to make choices and provide them with opportunities to exercise those choices.

The scheme is inspired by ideals of Mahatma Gandhi whose concept of rural development revolves around creating model villages for transforming 'swaraj' (self rule) into 'su-raj' (good governance). As part of the scheme, the villagers will prepare their own development plan, activities and fix targets for achievement. It seeks to not only provide physical infrastructure and access to basic amenities but also improve the standard of living, enrich social capital and build community spirit.

## Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of A Model Village

An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village. (Harijan, 9-1-1937)



## What SAGY will do?

Under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), each Member of Parliament (MP) would adopt a village (Gram Panchayat) and develop it as an Adarsh Gram (Model Village) by 2016. Two more such villages would be developed by 2019, and after that one village every year till 2014.

Gram Panchayat would be the basic unit for development. It will have a population of 3,000-5,000 in plain areas and 1,000-3,000 in hilly, tribal and difficult areas. Lok Sabha MP has to choose a Gram Panchayat from within his/her constituency and Rajya Sabha MP, a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of a district of his/her choice in the state from which he/she is elected. Nominated MPs may choose a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country. In the case of urban constituencies (where there are no Gram Panchayats such as Delhi), the MP will identify a Gram Panchayat from a nearby rural constituency.

Total number of MPs is 793 (Lok Sabha 543+ Rajya Sabha 250, 12 of which are nominated). So, if each MP adopts three villages, the scheme will be able to develop 2,379, Gram Panchayats by 2019. Thus, we would be able to create some model villages, which other villages can admire and implement in their own village (Peer pressure and competition are the best way to achieve results).

It is to be noted here that SAGY does not have any separate funding. Instead funding for model village projects has to be ensured through the convergence of existing Central and state government schemes, e.g. Indira Awas Yojana, PM

Sadak Yojana etc. Also, funds from MPLAD (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) can be used to this end.

## Village Development Plan

To achieve the goal of model village, a Village Development Plan is prepared under the leadership of Member of Parliament. This is done by involving villagers and leveraging scientific tools with special focus on enabling every poor household to come out of poverty. This includes personal development, human development, social development economic development and environmental development, in line with Gandhi's vision of a model village as depicted in following diagram -

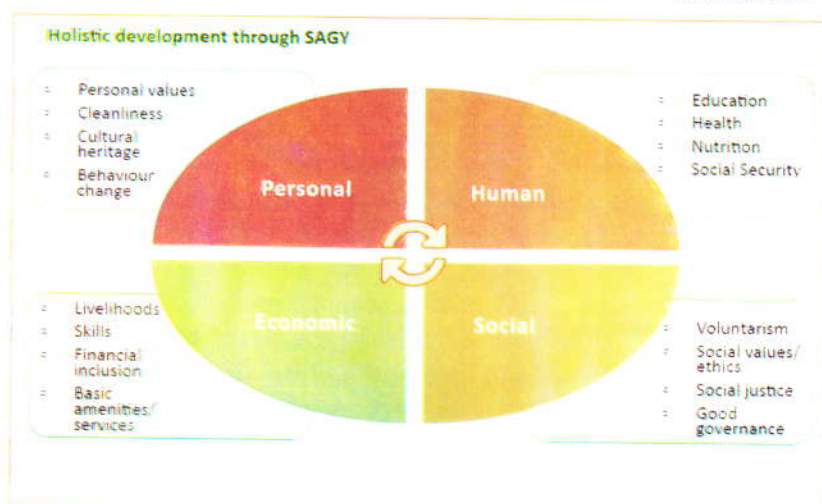
The planning process in each village will be a participatory exercise coordinated by the District Collector. The MP will play an active facilitating role in this exercise.

## Model village

If we draw a mental picture of how a 'model village' under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) would look like.... then we see that the village will have it all — 'smart schools', universal access to basic health facilities, *pucca* houses for the homeless, universal PDS for eligible families, e-governance and Aadhaar cards for all.

Pulling every household out of poverty would be the main thrust area of the scheme. Other than *pucca* houses for all, ensuring toilets in each household, supply of piped drinking water, all weather connectivity to the main road, electricity connection to all households, village libraries, telecom and broadband connectivity as well as CCTVs in public places would be the focus area.

The MPs will also directly support activities at village level like health camps, organising grievance redressal camps, community mobilisation etc. Unlike in other schemes, attention would be given to social issues as well. For instance, reducing risk behaviours like alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse (drugs/tobacco/gutka etc) among all age groups of population. Grassroot democracy





## Skill Development Initiatives

### Charting a new future for Youth with Skill Development

- Placement-linked skill training initiative aiming for rural poverty alleviation
- Government support for skilling courses ranging from Rs. 25,696 per candidate to Rs 1,22,362-DDUGKY BPL, residential, post-placement support of Rs. 2-2.25 lakh
- 724 on-going skill training projects in nearly 1,100 approved training centers across 21 states impacting youth from 568 districts
- Over 3.56 lakh youth trained, and over 1.88 lakh placed in jobs through Deen Dayal Gramin Kaushal Yojna
- Over 19.65 lakh youth trained for various skill development courses under PM Kaushal Vikas Yojna
- Loans ranging from Rs. 5,000-1.5 lakhs will be made available to 34 lakh youth

would be strengthened through strong and transparent Gram Panchayats and active Gram Sabhas. Women participation in the decision-making process will be encouraged. This would be done by holding Mahila Sabhas and Bal Sabhas to discuss women and children specific issues respectively. E-governance and e-literacy will also be given a push. Smart schools and e-libraries would be created.

Values such as respect for women, martyrs and elders, good hygiene, respect for the environment, good reading habits etc would be inculcated in our young generation. Quality health care would be ensured in these villages with an aim of 100 per cent immunization, 100 per cent institutional delivery, and reduction in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and reduced malnutrition among children.

Cultural life of the village would also be under the purview of SAGY. Folk art festivals, having a village song etc. will be promoted. Sports would be promoted for overall development of youth and they would be encouraged to exercise regularly, take balanced nutrition and ensure personal hygiene.

Technology would be leveraged effectively to make this programme successful, e.g. use of space application and remote sensing for planning, mobile based technology for monitoring, agriculture technology for increasing productivity etc.

### Implementation and Monitoring

As seen above, activities under SAGY are so diverse that close coordination and convergence will be required across different ministries, departments, schemes of the Government of India, MPLADS, state government and the private sector to implement the scheme successfully. Ministry of Rural Development will be nodal ministry for coordinating and monitoring the scheme. As no separate funds are allotted for the scheme, funds would be generated from the Gram Panchayats' own revenue, Central and state finance commission grants, MPLAD, CSR and funds for various central and state schemes. Hence, the central sector and centrally sponsored schemes along with the state schemes will have to be implemented in a convergent and integrated manner to generate maximum synergy and suitable changes would be made to these schemes to make them more useful from SAGY perspective. Ministry of Rural Development will be nodal Ministry for coordinating and monitoring the scheme.

At the national level, there would be a real time web based monitoring system. Capacity building programme for all right from Gram Panchayat functionaries to Member of Parliaments would be undertaken by the Ministry. At the state level there will be an Empowered Committee headed by the Chief Secretary consisting of the relevant departments and including experts with at least two civil society representatives. The district collector will be the nodal officer for implementing the SAGY. He will conduct a monthly review meeting which would be chaired by the Members of Parliament concerned. Each District Collector will nominate a Charge Officer of sufficient seniority for coordination the implementation of the scheme at the local level.

To encourage good performance, four kinds of awards have also been instituted in the following categories-

1. Best practices



2. Best Charge Officers
3. Best District Collectors
4. Best Adarsh Grams

### Performance of SAGY so far

So far two phases of SAGY have been launched. Phase –I was launched in 2014 and seemed quite successful with 702 MPs identifying villages for development. But this momentum seems to have fizzled out in second phase of SAGY with only 117 MPs identifying the villages so far (as on 11 August, 2016).

Below, we have tried to explain the reasons for this lukewarm response to phase –II of SAGY -

1. MPs have complained about scarcity of funds to carry out the development. Because there is no separate funding for SAGY and funds from existing schemes like Indira Awas Yojana, MGNREGS, PM Sadak Yojana etc., are to be used efficiently for development activities. Further, MPs have to use their MPLAD funds for developing model village which again serves as a disincentive.
2. Government had expected that funds from corporate, voluntary and private sectors would also be available for SAGY, but situation has not been very encouraging on this front.
3. SAGY envisages synergy and convergence of various development schemes. This is a tough task.
4. Another problem is related to the selection of the village. Guidelines provide that an MP can select any village except his own village or his spouse's village. This puts MPs in dilemma. If they select a village, then voters from other villages may question the move. But this can be sorted out by establishing effective communication with the masses and explaining the need and importance of the move.
5. Some MPs whose constituency is in urban area (e.g. Delhi) have to select a village from some other rural constituency. They are often unwilling to do so because, then they will have to spend their MPLAD funds outside their constituency which won't bring any political benefits for them.

### Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

#### Creating a clean India to pay the perfect tribute to Mahatma Gandhi

- Since the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October 2014, a change in mindsets is happening across the country
  - 1.92 crore toilets have already been constructed & 14 districts, 190 blocks, 23,790 Gram Panchayats and 56,206 villages have declared themselves as Open Defecation Free
  - Rural Sanitation coverage has increased from 42% to 52% in 2 years
  - Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya aimed to provide separate toilets for girls and boys in all schools of the country within one year; achieved remarkable success. Targets were fully achieved with 4.17 lakh toilets added to 2.61 lakh government elementary and secondary schools during the year from 15.8.2014 to 15.8.2015
6. Making few villages "Adarsh Gram" is rather easy. Real challenge would be to ensure that such schemes do not remain demonstrative projects, and are replicated on a mass scale. This has not happened yet.
  7. In the end comes the question of sustainability. To make this scheme sustainable in long term, we would need committed local leaders, like Anna Hazare, who can take this movement forward and make it a truly people's movement. But such people are not easy to find.

#### Conclusion

Aim of Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), was clear from the beginning- 'do-it-yourself rather than rely excessively on the government.' In doing so, current government has attempted to break away from the past tradition of seeing the government's role as benefactor and public as mute beneficiary. Rather, this model is based on the development with community participation. Hence everything needs to be done to make this scheme a success.

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