

Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana: A Holistic Approach Towards Making Indian Villages ‘Smart’

J.P. Yadav¹, Abhishek Sharma²

¹Professor and Head, Department of EAFM, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

²JRF (Research Scholar), Department of EAFM, University of Rajasthan

Email - abhishek.m.d.sharma@gmail.com

Abstract: India, a country of villages having 2,64,617 Gram Panchayats, would take huge amount of resources if government try to develop all these villages. According to 2011 Census, the population of rural areas comprised of 68.84%. Instead a strategy is devised in which some villages should be developed as model villages, with the help of community participation and remaining should be encouraged to emulate them in a competitive spirit. Governments alone cannot do anything, community also needs to take responsibility and initiatives. This is the thinking behind Government’s model village scheme ‘Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana’ (SAGY). The scheme is inspired by ideals of Mahatma Gandhi whose concept of rural development revolves around creating model villages for transforming ‘SWARAJ’ into ‘SU-RAJ’ that means Good governance. The concept of the smart village is not constructed on the image of a city or a very developed village of any state or nation. It doesn’t mean an adopted smartness, but an avenue to show the inherent smartness of the villages. Cultural heritage of the village would also be under the purview of SAGY. For encouraging better performance, four kinds of awards have also been instituted. This research paper is an effort to study various aspects of this scheme and evaluate its performance, so far, discussing some of the success stories of hard work and dedication, which basically aims to ‘Do it yourself rather than relying excessively on government’.

Keywords: Panchavats, Community, Good Governance, Smart Village.

1. THE IDEA OF ‘ADARSH GRAM’:

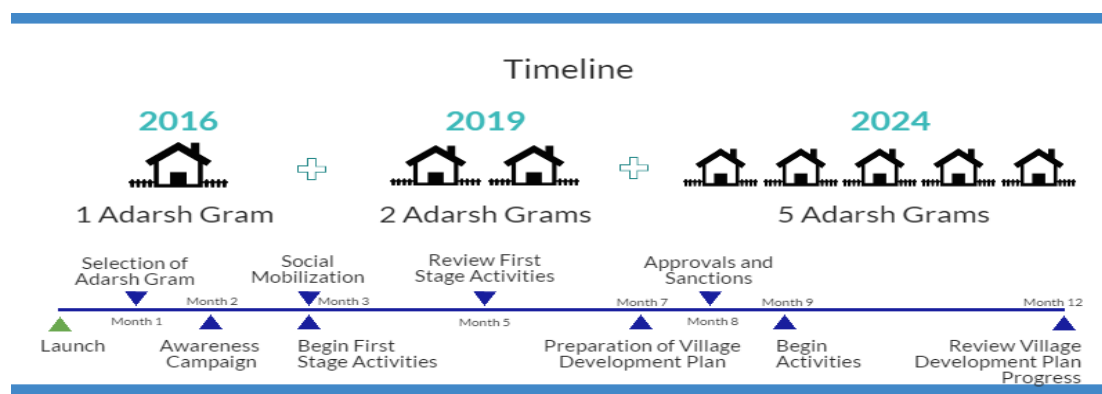
In 1975, Ralegan Siddhi, a village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, was one of the many villages of India plagued from acute poverty, deprivation, unemployment and a degraded ecosystem. Then one of its residents – ANNA HAZARE, retired from army and returned to his native place. Hazare inspired the villager to come together and improve 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 of 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 can’t do everything, community also needs to take responsibility and initiatives. This is the thinking behind ‘Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana’ (SAGY), the government’s model village scheme. Same as the case of Ralegan Siddhi, some more Gram Panchayats have shown exceptional achievements in integrated local development, mainly due to collective action and inspiring leadership. However many difficulties and challenges were faced by these people in the process. So it was the thought to create an institutional mechanism where this collective action by community be nurtured and promoted. Government aspires to achieve this through SAGY.

Government of India, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Jayaprakash Narayan launched the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana on October 11, 2014, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Damodardas Modi said: “One of the biggest problems for us has been that our development model has been supply driven. A scheme has been prepared in Delhi, Lucknow or Gandhinagar, the same is attempted to be injected. We want to shift this model from supply driven to demand driven through Adarsh Gram Yojana. 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 opportunities to exercise those choices. The scheme is inspired by ideals of Mahatma Gandhi of ‘Su-raj’; good governance instead of ‘Swaraj’. As part of the scheme, the villagers will prepare their own development plan, activities and fix targets for achievement. As it is a village development project and focuses on fostering the inclusive growth and development of the villages. It seeks to not only provide physical infrastructure and access to basic amenities but also improve the standard of living, building community spirit and enriching social capital.

One reason for the failure of rural development schemes has been the lack of holistic focus on the village as a unit. Separate flagship schemes targeting different sectors such as health (NRHM), education (SSA), and livelihood (MNREGA, NRLM) have been launched in the past, but met with limited success. The ‘Model Village’ concept could address these challenges comprehensively by addressing the deficit of resources in each of these sector, with adequate focus on the special needs of every village. The idea of ‘Adarsh Gram’ or Model village has been explored earlier as well most notably through the Pradhanmantri Adarsh Gram Yojana, launched by central government in 2009-10. The scheme was implemented on Pilot basis in 1000 villages of Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamilnadu, with an allocation of Rs. 10 lakh per village, which was later raised to Rs 20 lakh per village. The target villages under the scheme were those with more than 50% of population belonging to Schedule Castes (SCs). Additionally, state government have also taken steps in this direction. Himachal Pradesh government launched a Mukhya Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana along similar lines in 2011.

2. WORKING OF SAGY:



Under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, each Member of Parliament (MP) would adopt a village (Gram Panchayat) and develop it as an Adarsh Gram (Model Village) by 2016. Two more villages would be developed by 2019, and after that one village every year till 2024. Gram Panchayat would be the basic unit for development. It will constitute population of 3000-5000 in plain areas and 1000-3000 in mountain regions, tribal areas and difficult areas. Total number of MP’s is 793 (Lok Sabha 543 + Rajya Sabha 250, out of which 12 are nominated), if each MP adopts three villages, the scheme will be able to develop 2379 villages/ 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. 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 MP’s may choose Gram Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country. In the case of urban constituencies (where there are no Gram Panchayat such as Delhi), the MP will identify a Gram Panchayat from a nearby rural constituency. 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, such as Indira Aawas Yojana, PM Sadak Yojana, NRLM, NHM, MNREGA, RKVY, Mid Day Meal Scheme, etc. Also, funds from MPLAD (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) that is Rs. 5 Crore per year, could be utilized for the construction of high quality sustainable assets and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) funds, of which a much larger corpus is available after the latest amendment to the Companies Act could also be used to this end; the Self Help Groups who are eligible for subsidized loans under various government initiatives as well as Gram Panchayats could also raise loans if legally permitted to do so under the State Panchayati Raj Acts like in the case of Kerala.

To achieve the goal of model village a ‘Village development plan’ will be prepared will be 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, social development, economic development, human development and environmental development, in line with Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of a model village is- 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.

Adarsh Gram Selection and Focus

Selected Gram
Panchayats must have:

3000 - 5000

Population for plain areas

1000 - 3000

Population for hilly areas

Focus Areas:



Infrastructure



Community Service



Dignity of Women



Social Justice



Gender Equality



Cleanliness



Eco-friendliness



Peace and
Harmony

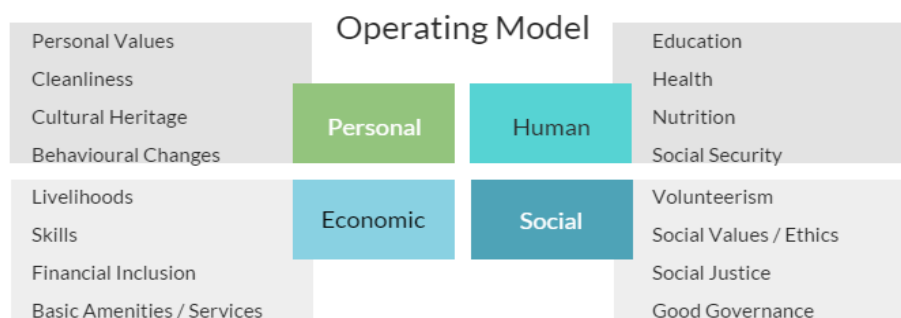
Key stages in the preparation of a Village Development Plan under SAGY are:

- Creating an environment for community-led planning, with the MP spearheading this campaign,
- Situation Analysis, including baseline surveying and resource mapping,
- Identification of financial resources streams,
- Finalizing needs,
- Preparation of the Village Development Plan (VDP) by a working group set up by the district collector with representation of experts from diverse fields,
- Clearance to VDP by the Gram Sabha,
- Approval of VDP by a District Level Committee headed by the District Collector in the presence of the MP.

3. MODEL VILLAGE:

If we draw a mental picture of how a ‘model village’ under SAGY would look like, then we see the village having it all – ‘smart schools’, universal access to basic health facilities, pucca houses for the homeless, universal PDS for the eligible families, e-governance and Aadhar cards for all. Pulling every household out of poverty would be the main thrust area of the scheme. Other than pucca house for all, ensuring toilets in each household, supply of piped drinking water, electricity connection to all households, village libraries, telecom and broadband connectivity as well as CCTVs in public places would be the focus areas. The MPs will also directly support activities at village level like health camps, organizing grievance redressal camps, community mobilization etc. Unlike to the other schemes the focus would be given to social issues as well. For instance, reducing risk behaviors like alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse (drugs/ tobacco/ gutkha etc) among all age groups of population. Grass route democracy would be strengthened through strong and transparent gram panchayats and active gram sabhas. Women participation in the decision making process would be encouraged, 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 by creating e-libraries and smart schools.

Values such as respect for women, martyrs, elders and for environment, good hygiene, good reading habits etc would be inculcated in our young generation. Quality healthcare would be ensured in these villages with an aim of 100% immunization, 100% 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, dance etc. will be promoted. Sports would be promoted for overall development of youth and encouraged to exercise regularly, take balanced nutrition and ensure personal hygiene. Technology would be leveraged effectively to make this programme successful, just like use of space application and remote sensing for planning, mobile based technology for monitoring, agriculture technology for increasing productivity etc.

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF SAGY:

As seen above, activities under SAGY are so diverse that close coordination and convergence will be required across different ministries, departments, scheme 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 Gram Panchayats' own revenue, central and state finance commission grants, MPLADS, CSR and funds from various other central and state government 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.

At the national level, there would be a real time web based monitoring system. Capacity building programme for all right from Gram Panchayats functionaries to Member of Parliaments would be undertaken by 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 coordinating the implementation of the scheme at local level.

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

1. Best Adarsh Grams,
2. Best Charge Officers,
3. Best District Collectors,
4. Best Practices.

5. CASE STUDIES - SOME SUCCESS STORIES:

- **Laderwan village, Block Trehgam, District Kupwara, Jammu & Kashmir**, the major activity of the people living there is agriculture. To promote scientific agriculture the mobile no. of 380 farmers were linked with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK). The KVK disseminates sms messages on weather forecast and on recommended package of practices for specific crops at critical stages of the crop production. This has been undertaken under the guidance of the **Member of Parliament, Mr. Muzaffar Hussain Baig**. As a result, farmers are now getting regular agro-advisories on their mobile phones, including messages on scientific sowing practices, soil testing, crop protection, agronomic practices, post-harvest

technologies and market information. This enables people to take informed decisions relating to crop production and marketing their agriculture produce.

- **Bangurda Gram Panchayat, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**, there is high prevalence of Anaemia and other ailments, especially among women and adolescent girls. In order to address this **Mr. Bidyut Baran Mahato, the Member of Parliament** initiated a series of health camps specifically targeted towards the adolescent girls. The health camps were organized at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya, where more than 190 adolescent girls were screened, as a result many of them found to be suffering from various gynecological diseases, urinary tract infections and skin diseases, which hitherto, were suppressed by them owing to socio-cultural taboos. Interventions are underway to create awareness on personal hygiene among the residents. This will be a sustained intervention to be carried out regularly in the villages.
- **Kumbalangi Village, Ernakulam District, Kerala**, A model for Eco-tourism, a fishing hamlet which has been developed as a unique rural tourist destination with a focus on eco-tourism, while offering tourists a glimpse of the rich and rustic Indian countryside life. The important attractions include organic farm produce used to prepare meals for tourists, toddy tapping and Crab farming. To keep the village clean and serving its energy needs, households are provided subsidies for setting up mini biogas plants in their households. The Kumbalangi approach could be adopted by other coastal villages to boost tourism and to provide livelihood to local communities.
- **Punsari village, Sabarkantha District, Gujarat**, has emerged as a model village with modern urban amenities such as 24x7 power supply, WiFi Connectivity, CCTV cameras to ensure security and pucca roads connecting the village with other villages and towns. Other important achievements of this village includes:
 - A reverse osmosis plant which provides 20 litres of water to each household at just Rs 4.
 - Use of solar power for agro based activities.
 - Accidental insurance cover to one member of every household.
 - Air conditioned primary schools with ‘No Dropouts’
 - Focus on behavioral change through campaigns and awareness drives, for this purpose 120 loudspeakers have been installed in different part of the village.

Punsari was awarded with ‘Best Gram Panchayat Award’ from the Centre and the State in 2011.

Performance of SAGY so far:

So far two phases of SAGY have been launched; Phase-1 was launched in 2014 and seems adequate success with 702 MPs identifying villages for development. But this momentum seems to have fizzled out on second phase of SAGY with only 117 MPs identifying the villages so far till 10 August, 2016.

There are some reasons that the researchers have been found for the lukewarm response to Phase-II of SAGY:

- MPs are constantly complaining about funds scarcity for carrying out development activities, because there is no separate funding for SAGY and funds from existing schemes 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.
- 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.
- SAGY envisages synergy and convergence of various development schemes, which is a tough task.
- Some MPs whose constituency is in urban area (e.g. Delhi) have to select a village from other rural constituency. They are often unwillingly to do so because, then they have to spend their MPLAD funds outside their constituency which won't bring any political benefits for them.
- Another problem is related to the selection of the village. Guidelines provided 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.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

Aim of SAGY, was very clear from the beginning- ‘Do it yourself rather than rely excessively on government.’ In doing so, present NDA government has attempted to break away from the past tradition of seeing the government’s role as benefactor and public as mute beneficiaries. Rather, this model is based on the development with community participation, hence everything needs to be done to make this scheme a success. Making few villages ‘Adarsh Gram’ is relatively easy, real challenge would be to ensure that such schemes do not remain demonstrative projects, and are replicated on a mass scale. This has to be happened yet. In the end every moves comes to sustainability. For making this scheme sustainable in long term, we would need committed local leaders like Anna Hazare, who can take this movement forward in a positive direction without having any political or personal interest, just to set another exemplary story for the sake of country’s development and prosperity by making it a completely people’s movement. Many of such success stories are there in our country and many more are yet to come. It is rightly said that “Mobilizing a community is easy once the benefits of the initiative are clearly explained and understood.”

The following can be possible strategies to convert the identified village into an ‘Adarsh Gram’

- Entry point activities to energize and mobilize the community towards positive common action;
- Participatory planning exercise for identifying people’s needs and priorities in an integrated manner;
- Strengthening the Gram Panchayats and people’s institutions within them by promoting transparency and accountability;
- Converging resources from central sector and centrally sponsored schemes and also other state schemes to the extent possible.

REFERENCES:

1. Aadarsh Gram, Voluntary health association of India, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 5-6
2. Census of India 2011, New Delhi, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011
3. <http://censusindia.gov.in/>
4. Joshi Divya, Gandhiji on Villages, manibhawan Gandhi sangrahaalay 2015 Jan 8,
5. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. New Delhi:2014 october, India, Department of Rural Development Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Guidelines,
6. Prabhu RK compilation, Panchayati Raj, Navjeevan publishing house, Ahmedabad,

WEB REFERENCES:

1. www.saanjhi.gov.in
2. www.swaniti.in
3. www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/
4. <http://www.mapsofindia.com/government-of-india/saansad-adars-gram-yojana.html>
5. <http://panchayatportals.gov.in/>
6. <http://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/?p=3295>