

Role of Swagramamitra in Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals: An Empirical Study on Integral Humanism

Ms. Anusree S.L¹, Prof. Sampadananda Mishra²

¹*Corresponding Author, Affiliation: Research Associate, Centre for Human Sciences, Rishihood University, Sonipat, Haryana- India*

²*Affiliation: Director, Centre for Human Sciences, Rishihood University, Sonipat, Haryana- India*

Abstract—This paper explores the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the grassroots level in India. It tries to specifically examine the endeavours of Swagramamitra (Community Resource Person) in Doddamadhure, Karnataka. It will be based on the data collected during the two field visits to the Doddamadhure and Chitrakoot as part of the Integral Humanism Project at the Centre for Human Sciences, Rishihood University, Sonipat.

Before pursuing nationwide SDG achievements, understanding the ground-level activities in Indian villages becomes essential. As Mahatma Gandhi famously stated that India's soul resides in its villages. Although efforts to establish SDGs are being made at the Panchayat level, it is crucial to assess the villagers' awareness and the ultimate objectives of SDG implementation in these rural communities.

This study aims to address fundamental questions surrounding SDGs' establishment in villages and raise awareness among villagers about these goals. By focusing on community development, through the mutual interdependence (*parasparavalambana*) of individuals, we can achieve self-reliance (*Swalambana*) of a nation. Integral Humanism, a concept proposed by Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhaya, forms the basis for achieving SDGs and promoting sustainable development.

Index Terms—Sustainable Development Goals, Community Development, Integral Humanism, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhaya, and Swagram Mitra

I. INTRODUCTION

"The villagers can make great progress if they work like this in co-operation with one another. Ours is a small village. We should inquire and find out in which spheres of activity and to what extent we can work on a co-operative basis. Even if all villagers are not

inclined to follow the co-operative method we must find out those who are prepared to give it a trial..." (Gandhi, 1941)

India's villages are integral to the nation's cultural identity and historical legacy, as highlighted by Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote. These rural areas, deeply rooted in ancient values and traditions, remain as the soul of India. However, despite this rich heritage, rural communities face challenges, notably a lack of awareness on how to use their resources for self-reliance. Community development programs emerge as a solution, emphasizing local involvement and recognizing the wisdom within these communities. The issue lies in many villagers' unawareness of these programs, prompting collaboration among stakeholders like NGOs, private organizations, and government institutions. They empower community resource persons to bridge the gap and initiate projects targeting critical areas like education and healthcare. These programs align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and resonate with the principles of integral humanism, promoting self-reliance and balanced growth.

A research expedition in villages like Doddamadhure showcase the transformative impact of Swagramamitras (Community Resource Persons), acting as catalysts for change in village development, education, healthcare, and sustainable development. These insights provide guidance for policymakers and development practitioners to achieve holistic and inclusive development in rural India. In essence, the cooperation between community development programs and Sustainable development practices along with integral humanism initiative offers a roadmap for a brighter, more equitable, and

sustainable future for India's villages, bridging the gap between aspiration and achievement. India's soul (chiti) thrives in its vibrant rural heartland as these programs continue to make a difference.

II. ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ALONG WITH INTEGRAL HUMANISM INITIATIVE

Combining community development with the principles of Integral Humanism offers a holistic and sustainable approach to achieving the SDGs. By prioritizing the well-being, dignity, and inclusivity of individuals and communities, we can address the root causes of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. We can move closer to a world where every individual can lead a life of dignity and opportunity. This integrated approach exemplifies the idea that true development should not be measured solely by economic growth but by the well-being and happiness of all members of society.

“Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and stakeholders, acting in a collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one is left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. UN HQ NYC September 25th, 2015” United Nations (2015)

The Sustainable Development Goals represent a shared vision for a better world, driven by a profound motive to rectify the injustices and imbalances that mar our current reality. They are a response to the pressing need to protect our planet and ensure a dignified life for all. Achieving these goals is not just an international commitment but a moral imperative.

The purpose of the Sustainable Development Goals is nothing short of transforming our world. These 17 goals, with their 169 associated targets, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action. Their overarching purpose is to end poverty, protect our planet, and ensure prosperity for all by the year 2030. This is not a mere aspiration; it's a solemn commitment to create a world where no one is left behind, where every individual's dignity and rights are upheld, and where our environment is preserved for future generations.

The SDGs were conceived as a response to these urgent global issues. They are driven by the collective recognition that we cannot continue the path of unsustainable development, where economic growth comes at the expense of social justice and ecological balance. The motive is, quite simply, to secure a better future for humanity. The need for sustainable development, encapsulated in the SDGs, arises from the fundamental desire to address these pressing issues comprehensively, holistically, and directly.

We need the SDGs to foster collaboration and cooperation among nations, communities, and individuals. They serve as a roadmap, guiding us toward a future where we strike a harmonious balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship. The SDGs acknowledge that these dimensions are interdependent, and addressing one without the other is a recipe for failure. For the attainment to achieving SDG, Community Development act as the catalyst between individual and nation. Community development involves two essential components: "community" and "development." A community is a group of people living in a defined geographic area, united by a sense of unity and interdependency or sharing common characteristics and interests. Over the past centuries, the idea of community has evolved significantly, transitioning from predominantly rural and agricultural societies to urban, industrialized, and, more recently, post-industrial societies. This shift has led to a decline in community life and civil society organizations, eroding traditional family networks and increasing inequality among different groups. Consequently, institutions have emerged to meet the needs of people that were previously addressed by the community itself.

The concept of development implies progress or positive change aimed at enhancing the well-being

and self-reliance of various groups of people. Development encompasses both social and economic dimensions, focusing on factors like security, freedom, dignity, and self-development. In essence, community development seeks to facilitate positive changes within specific communities to improve their overall quality of life, combining social and economic development efforts to achieve these goals. Community development may be defined as a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are combined with those of governmental authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.

“Another important principle of community development is sustainability. An example of how social workers can work towards sustainable development” (Rambaree, 2013). Community Development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. Community Development Workers or Community Resource Persons support individuals, groups, and organizations in this process since certain values and commitments. Community development works for strengthening of face-to-face communities to meet the psychological needs of belonging, practical needs of mutual care, and the political need for participation and campaigning for rights and resources.

Integral Humanism acts as the foundational idea and principle that underpin a holistic and sustainable approach to achieving the SDGs through Community Development Programs. It emphasizes human well-being, dignity, and inclusivity while addressing the root causes of development challenges, making it a powerful framework for advancing a more just and sustainable world. Integral Humanism and the SDGs acknowledge the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental dimensions. They both emphasize the importance of addressing these dimensions collectively, as they are intertwined and impact one another.

The SDGs serve as a roadmap for nurturing collaboration and cooperation among nations, communities, and individuals. This collaborative spirit aligns with the community-driven approach of

Community Development Programs, which act as the catalysts for implementing the principles of Integral Humanism.

III. DODDAMADHURE IS THE MODEL VILLAGE FOR SWAGRAMAMITRA FELLOWSHIP PROJECT

Swagrama Fellowship project is a testament to the power of community-driven development and the pivotal role played by Swagramamitras (Community Development Persons) in shaping the destiny of villages. Doddamadhure's journey towards development is intimately tied to its connection with the village pond, which serves as a lifeline for its economic progress. For generations, this village has relied on the natural resource of the common village pond for sustenance and livelihoods. The prudent utilization of this resource not only laid the foundation for economic growth but also opened doors to explore other natural assets. The availability of water from the pond has significantly enhanced agricultural output, offering economic stability to numerous families. Yet, this prosperity was not without its challenges.

One of the village's major setbacks was the migration of its youth to urban centres, primarily driven by economic factors. The allure of city life initially attracted them, but soon, the realization dawned that the village's very existence depended on agriculture, making a reliable water source imperative. Unfortunately, the governmental water supply to the canals had ceased in the past, intensifying the water scarcity issue. In response to this challenge, the villagers took it upon themselves to organize and initiate a solution. Collective efforts led to the formation of groups focused on understanding available provisions and regulations to secure their water resources. Initially centred around Doddamadhure, neighbouring villages with shared interests soon joined forces, creating a powerful movement.

This united effort involved demonstrations and strikes, sending a strong message to the government. Eventually, the government conducted inspections and cleaned the canals, resulting in the restoration of water supply. This success story resonated across 24 villages, leading to the establishment of a sub-district administrative unit called "Hobli." Doddamadhure became the central hub of this structure, with the

formation of a Hobli level farmers' association. The "Neeru Valakkaidharata Samga" (Water Utilization Group) was established to maintain the canal system and ensure equitable water distribution.

Regular general body meetings were conducted to assess canal conditions, plan water supply improvements, and set goals for the upcoming year. With a consistent water supply, the village diversified its activities, including venturing into fisheries. Those granted the pond tender became stakeholders, contributing to the village fund for community-driven development. This fund supported the creation of a Community Hall, generating additional income for the village through various ceremonies and events. The revenue further facilitated the enhancement of school facilities and basic amenities.

The villagers' commitment to preserving cultural traditions, reviving traditional practices, focusing on education, and nurturing spiritual development have been central to their coordinated efforts. Through the guidance and leadership of Swagramamitras, Doddamadhure village has achieved self-reliance and socio-economic growth, ensuring a brighter future for its residents. The Swagrama Fellowship Project stands as a remarkable testament to the transformative power of community-driven initiatives and the dedication of Swagramamitras in shaping the destiny of villages.

IV. SWAGRAMAMITRA FELLOWSHIP PROJECT: A NEW INITIATIVE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The attainment of India's independence was a direct outcome of this search for self—a journey marked by both revival and loss. As we reflect on the past 75 years, the focus naturally shifts to the exploration of our identity and direction. If the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" serves as a tribute to this legacy of recovery, it compels us to evaluate our current position and chart the course for our future journey. In this pursuit of self-discovery, the Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University (KSRDPU), in collaboration with esteemed partners such as Youth for Seva, Chanakya University, and the Abdul Nazeer Sab Chair at Kuvempu University, has embarked on a transformative three-year initiative—"Gram Swarajya: Reflections and Commitments." This visionary endeavour aims to delve into the very heart of our identity, to understand the essence of self

that has guided us through centuries of Indian resistance. Through this initiative, we navigate the paths of self-reflection, shaping the trajectory of our future while honouring the values that have shaped our past. Swagram fellowship program envisages to institute fellowships to achieve holistic rural development. This is a unique group fellowship where two people team from a village can apply. This is a part-time fellowship and hence can be sustained beyond the fellowship period. We have the following objectives for the Swagram fellowship.

V. ROLE OF SWAGRAMAMITRA IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The role of a "Swagrama Mitra" within the Swagramamitra Fellowship is multi-faceted and deeply rooted in the organization's objectives. Each fellow, bearing the honorable title of "Swagrama Mitra," dedicates a substantial portion of their time, typically between 12 to 15 hours per week, to their village. Their mission extends beyond traditional development approaches, focusing on integral and participatory methods.

As a Swagrama Mitra, their foremost task is to foster unity and collaboration among villagers by orchestrating gatherings where people converge to discuss and collectively determine the priorities of the village. These discussions form the basis for the activities they design, emphasizing the process of working together rather than merely achieving specific goals. To facilitate this participatory approach, each Swagrama Mitra forms a network of informal coordination committees within their village, uniting a diverse group of individuals. Their role is not that of a change-maker, but rather a catalyst, nurturing the participatory spirit of the community.

Crucially, Swagramamitras ensure that all activities are collectively decided upon, aligning with the fellowship's objective of nurturing inspired individuals in rural areas. They equip themselves with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary for holistic rural development, transcending the limitations of governmental programs or individual-centric development. The overarching vision of the Swagramamitra Fellowship is to build self-reliant villages based on the principles of interdependence and cooperation. Swagramamitras play an essential role in manifesting this ideal, helping their villages

develop according to their unique "self" or "svabhava." Furthermore, they work towards scaling this model of holistic rural development to a national level, employing appropriate models and frameworks. In essence, the role of a Swagramamitra is that of a community resource person, nurturing the collective spirit of their village, and working towards the greater vision achievement of self-reliance of a nation or community through the mutual interdependence of individuals.

VI. IMPACTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN SWAGRAMAMITRA PROJECT

The Swagramamitra Fellowship Project in Doddamadhure village serves as an exemplary model that intricately intertwines with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This transformative initiative not only aligns with the SDGs but also epitomizes core values of self-reliance, cooperation, and participatory development, setting a powerful precedent for sustainable change.

First and foremost, the project resonates with SDG 1: No Poverty. Its primary objective revolves around equipping rural individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for holistic rural development. By empowering the villagers with these tools, the project paves the way for increased income generation and, ultimately, the reduction of poverty within the community. If we focus on SDG 2: Zero Hunger is another goal that the project fervently addresses. By promoting activities like traditional food revival and sustainable agriculture practices, it makes significant strides in improving food security and alleviating hunger in the village. Move to SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being find resonance in the project's endeavours as well. Through the revival of traditional medicinal practices and enhancements in health management, the project contributes to improved health and overall well-being among community members.

Education, a cornerstone of development, aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education. The project emphasizes education and awareness, facilitating the creation of educational initiatives that include the documentation of socio-economic and cultural aspects of the village. Though not explicitly mentioned, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation indirectly benefits from the project's

focus on holistic development. Efforts to secure clean water resources are essential components of this initiative, indirectly contributing to this SDG.

In SDG 10: Reduced Inequality stands as a pivotal point in the project's mission. It actively addresses inequalities by promoting inclusion and cooperation among villagers, fostering an environment where all members, regardless of caste, gender, religion, linguistic background, or age, can actively participate in development activities. While primarily centered on rural development, the project also intersects with SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Its emphasis on sustainability, commensal relations, and cooperation aligns seamlessly with the broader goal of creating sustainable communities. The project's commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and environmental sensitivity aligns harmoniously with SDG 15: Life on Land, supporting the preservation of life on land for current and future generations.

Finally, SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals is a central tenet of the Swagramamitra Fellowship Project. The Swagramamitras actively engage with various stakeholders, including government agencies, experts, and community members, thereby fostering partnerships crucial for achieving sustainable development goals.

In sum, the Swagramamitra Fellowship Project in Doddamadhure village serves as an inspiring embodiment of the Sustainable Development Goals. It not only addresses multiple SDGs directly but also upholds the overarching values of cooperation, self-reliance, and participatory development, setting a commendable example for sustainable development initiatives worldwide.

VII. INTEGRAL HUMANISM MUTUAL INTERDEPENDENCE MODEL

The visit to Doddamadhure Village and analysis of the Swagrama Fellowship project shed light on the relationship between Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's concepts, ranging from "vyashti" to "parameshti." In the Integral Humanism Initiative project, self-reliance holds a pivotal position as a core value. This implies that Integral Humanism is regarded as a fundamental idea or principle guiding our endeavours.

Our objective is to explore deeper into this concept through a grassroots-level approach implemented via community development programs. To achieve this,

we have chosen to focus on community development programs as our primary strategy. These programs are the streams through which we aspire to attain one of our overarching goals—the Sustainable Development Goals.

This approach signifies our commitment to establishing a harmonious connection between Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's concepts, namely "vyashti," "samashsti," "srishti," and "parameshti." These concepts represent distinct layers of human existence, starting from the individual (vyashti) and extending to the collective (samashsti), the world or environment (srishti), and eventually culminating in the universal or transcendent (parameshti). The common thread binding these layers together is the principle of mutual interdependence for achieving the chiti through the self-reliance value, which weaves through each stage of this holistic journey.

For introducing this concept, we need a new model based on Integral Humanism in a scientific manner which requires a clear and structured approach called, *"Integral Humanism Mutual Interdependence Model"*. This model explained the community development, through the mutual interdependence (parasparavalambana) of individuals and achieve self-reliance (Swalambana) of a nation.

VIII. EXPLANATION OF THE INTEGRAL HUMANISM MUTUAL INTERDEPENDENCE MODEL:

The Integral Humanism Mutual Interdependence is a pictorial model that illustrates the interconnectedness of key elements in our pursuit of sustainable development, rooted in the principles of Integral Humanism. Here's the explanation of the model:

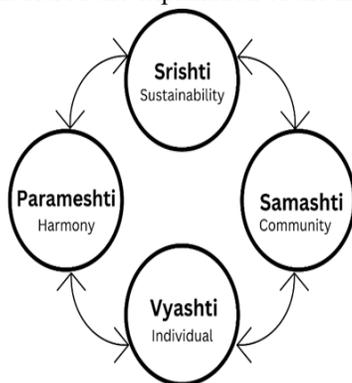


Figure:1 (Integral Humanism Mutual Interdependence Model)

From the vantage point of the Swagramamitra Fellowship Project, a profound connection emerges with the Integral Humanism Perspective. This connection is visually articulated through a model grounded in network theory, which comprises four interconnected nodes. It is essential to understand that these nodes cannot exist in isolation; they are intricately reliant on one another.

In common social theory, the individual is often regarded as the fundamental unit of society. From the individual, we expand to the family, then to the community, and further onward to society, ultimately culminating at the national level. However, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay's Integral Humanism seeks to transcend this conventional understanding by introducing the Upanishadic concept of "ekatmatha" or integration. This perspective emphasizes that our connections extend not only to our fellow humans but also to the broader universe.

Integral Humanism, as articulated by Pandit Ji, redefines the relationship between the individual and society. It underscores that individuals are intrinsically connected to society, and through mutual interdependence, they form bonds that lead to the creation of communities. To address the material needs of these communities, various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, and other institutions, engage in community development programs (CDPs). These programs are often coordinated by a dedicated Community Resource Person, exemplified by the Swagramamitra in Doddamadhure village.

While community development programs encompass a multitude of goals, they are universally geared towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through sustainable practices. In essence, SDGs are considered the outcomes or by-products of CDPs, reflecting the concept of "Srishti" or creation. These collective activities ultimately converge in the pursuit of holistic harmony, denoted as "Parameshti."

The underlying principle of these activities is mutual interdependence, fostering the attainment of self-reliance on a global scale. To symbolize this intricate process, a network theory is introduced, visually represented by a two-headed arrow, signifying the dynamic interplay of elements in this holistic framework.

IX. CONCLUSION

The journey through India's villages, as exemplified by the transformative Swagramamitra Fellowship Project, unveils a profound connection between integral humanism, community development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These rural areas, the heart and soul of India, are poised for holistic and sustainable development, bridging the gap between aspiration and achievement.

The integration of community development programs with the principles of integral humanism offers a potent formula for achieving the SDGs. This approach prioritizes the well-being, dignity, and inclusivity of individuals and communities, addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. It underscores that genuine development should not be solely measured by economic growth but by the well-being and happiness of all members of society. The SDGs themselves are a shared vision for a better world, a collective commitment to end poverty, protect our planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. They emphasize the interdependence of economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship, recognizing that these dimensions are intricately linked and must be addressed together.

Community development acts as the vital catalyst bridging the individual and the nation towards the attainment of the SDGs. It involves strengthening face-to-face communities, addressing psychological needs, mutual care, and political participation for rights and resources. Integral humanism, as the foundational principle, guides this holistic approach, emphasizing human well-being, dignity, and inclusivity while addressing the intertwined dimensions of social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Doddamadhure village, through the Swagramamitra Fellowship Project, embodies the spirit of this integrated approach. It actively addresses multiple SDGs, notably poverty reduction, food security, health, education, reduced inequality, sustainable communities, and environmental preservation. It stands as a shining example of cooperation, self-reliance, and participatory development, offering valuable lessons for sustainable initiatives worldwide. The Integral Humanism Mutual Interdependence Model represents a structured and scientific approach to this holistic development journey. This model

illustrates the interconnectedness of key elements in our pursuit of sustainable development, rooted in the principles of integral humanism. It emphasizes mutual interdependence as the driving force for achieving self-reliance on both individual and national levels, offering a clear path forward.

Integration of integral humanism, community development, and the SDGs presents a compelling framework for a brighter, more equitable, and sustainable future, not only for India's villages but for communities worldwide, reaffirming the importance of the collective journey towards a better world.

REFERENCES

- [1] A.R. Desai (2005) Rural India in Transition, 2nd ed Popular Prakashan Mumbai
- [2] Dharampal, G. (2017). Essential Writings of Dharampal. Publications Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.
- [3] Fulmali, K. (2020). Analysis of the Ekatma Manavvad (Integrated Humanism) With reference to organisational development of India. *Available at SSRN 3570723*.
- [4] Rambaree, K. (2013). Social work and sustainable development: Local voices from Mauritius. *Australian Social Work*, 66(2), 261-276.
- [5] Robert, K. W., Parris, T. M., & Leiserowitz, A. A. (2005). What is sustainable development? Goals, indicators, values, and practice. *Environment: science and policy for sustainable development*, 47(3), 8-21.
- [6] Sachs, J. D. (2012). From millennium development goals to sustainable development goals. *The lancet*, 379(9832), 2206-2211.
- [7] Sachs, J. D., Schmidt-Traub, G., Mazzucato, M., Messner, D., Nakicenovic, N., & Rockström, J. (2019). Six transformations to achieve the sustainable development goals. *Nature sustainability*, 2(9), 805-814.
- [8] Sharma, D. M. C. (2017). *Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya*. Publications Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.
- [9] Singh Kartar (1999) Rural Development in India Sage Publications
- [10] Singh, M. (2022). Socio-Political Idea of Deendayal Upadhyaya for Transformation of India.

- [11] Singh, V. V. (2016). An Analysis of Central Government Schemes for Youth & Poor Peoples. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Research (IJEMR)*, 6(2), 524-527.
- [12] Soni, S. K. Deendayal Upadhyaya: Man, Mission and Message, 97.
- [13] Swagramamitra Fellowship Project - <https://ksrdpru.ac.in/page.aspx?id=72>.
- [14] United Nations. (2015c). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. General Assembly 70 Session, 16301(October), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2>
- [15] Uphoff Normon and Krishna Anirudh & Esman J. (eds).(1998) Reasons for Hope: Instructive Experiences in Rural Development Sage Publications New Delhi,