
**Gram Swaraj; Gram Uddyog; O Gram Sampurnota: 'atmashakti O Samuha'
- Envisaged by 'Gurudev Tagore'**

First Author (correspondence): Arpan Mukherjee
PhD Scholar (MAKAUT) Assistant Professor & HOD
Department of Business Administration
BITM (MAKAUT), Santiniketan, Sriniketan Bypass
P.O.-Dwaranda, West Bengal
Pin – 731236 Contact – 7001419745 orcid id - 0009-0000-6793-9045
Second Author: Dr. Manik Chatterjee
Professor Department of Business Administration
BITM (MAKAUT), Santiniketan, Sriniketan Bypass
P.O.-Dwaranda, West Bengal
Pin – 731236 Contact – 8016048117

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Abstract

Atmashakti, meaning inner power or self-power, is a concept deeply ingrained in Indian culture and philosophy. Knowledge is to be transmitted to a section of community for field application and a feedback process to know the problems arising wherefrom for further improvement of technology. Adapting new technological change is necessary to create interest for acceptance of specific activity in the rural society. The basic goal of the study is to search out an ideal value absorption design. While designing the study we have taken into account the existed, existing and exiled system in rural ethos. We can usher in an age never experienced converting values into services which (i) create infrastructure so essential for agriculture, cottage & small industries (ii) make economic activities viable (iii) take care of producers' and consumers' interest, augmenting production streamlining the distribution system. As such a cohesive institutional framework of Maha-Sangha (a valued community development society) with the features of moneylender, development banking, co-operative and NGO as well is to be coped up and by no means be individualized. Such an endeavor will ensure "Gram-Raj, Gram-Udyoug and Gram-Swampournata"(village self-rule, village enterprises and village self-reliance).

Keywords: self-help & group, value incorporation, rural moral beliefs, maha-sangha, village self-reliance, Indian rural development

“চাই স্বাধীনতা, চাই পক্ষের বিস্তার, বক্ষে ফিরে পেতে চাই শক্তি আপনার,

পরানে স্পর্শিতে চাই ছিঁড়িয়া বন্ধন অনন্ত এ জগতের হৃদয়স্পন্দন। ”

A line of Poem ‘Savyatar Prati’ by Rabindranath Tagore – A visionary social reformer, who could visualize India’s much needed rural self-reliance and reform much before it actually started. He was against migration of rural folks to cities and towns. Rather he wanted co-operatives, banks and educational gestures to develop in rural sector in the means of integrated collective mutual co operations.

1: Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore viewed Swaraj beyond mere political freedom, seeing it as a profound spiritual and social awakening rooted in deep introspection and inner transformation (Tagore, Atmasakti, Rabindra Rachanabali; Quinn, 1997). He stressed that true Swaraj lay in empowering individuals and nurturing collective strengths, where everyone actively contributes to the pursuit of freedom. His concept of ‘Atmashakti O Samuha’ serves as a powerful call against oppression, urging individuals to ignite their inner power and unite for a brighter, liberated future (Tagore, Letters from Java, 1927; Speech in Rabindra Bhavana Archives).

Despite impatience with India's development pace, millions still endure abject poverty characterized by 'Bhukh, Bhay & Bhrastachar'. Achieving social, economic, and political justice remains a distant goal. The persistent backwardness of vast areas and sectors presents both challenges and opportunities. The nation requires determined action through effective, self-sustaining, democratic, and self-regulatory organizational structures. Ensuring basic elements like life sustenance, self-respect, and freedom of choice is crucial (Elmhirst, 1975). Forging a new approach to rural development necessitates an organizational setup that enhances absorptive capacity through ease of access, simplified procedures, effective monitoring, and advisory services to realize potential. Any approach benefiting people and improving the economy must prioritize rural areas, with the pace and direction of measures guided by social objectives and the community's absorptive capacity (O'Connell, 2002). Realistic planning, acknowledging available resources, is key, as development is a process of transforming potential into reality, requiring continuous monitoring and adaptation.

An economic period analysis validates that growth between 1950 and 1980, although high, did not raise the well-being of the average individual because poverty and deprivation still existed, contrary to the trickle-down argument. The 1980 to 2000 market and globalization era fell short of expectations because inequality between rich and poor proved a need for a different strategy than unidimensional growth (Bose, 2013). Market reforms such as liberalization and privatization went in reverse, but most social and environmental dimensions were left unexamined. Between 2000 and 2015, the challenge was sustainability. Political deprivation (absence of rights, participation, rule of law, transparency) and social deprivation

(marginalization, low cohesion, vulnerability) indicators were frequently ignored. Equitable distribution, job creation, and human rights were insufficiently represented (Menon, 1998). The effective use and absorption of resources, along with institutional capabilities, were also crucial but often compromised by prioritizing quantity over quality and inputs over efficiency. Overemphasis on external funding often overshadowed national political will (Elmhirst, 1975). Sustainability, encompassing ecological and economic dimensions, has become a core principle. It is an evolutionary process where resource uses, initiatives, technology, and institutions align to enhance current and future human needs (Coomaraswamy, 1910). More precisely, sustainability means on-going prosperity intertwined with economic advancement, demographic balance, and harmony, allowing human life and culture to flourish within ecological limits without compromising diversity or functionality. Arising from interactions within a socio-economic context, sustainability acts as a "regulative idea" requiring adequate institutions across societal sectors. An effective supervision system with preventive, punitive, and corrective measures is vital to identify vulnerabilities and enhance confidence. The entire value system, both economic and tangible, must transform during this transition, altering expectations about future resource utilization (Jayaraj, 2019).

2: Literature Review

Tagore's concept of Swaraj encompassed not just political freedom but a deep spiritual and social awakening, emphasizing the development of Atmashakti (self-strength) and Samuha (collective unity), as discussed in his works such as *Atmashakti* and illustrated through his literary and philosophical reflections (Tagore, Rabindra Rachanabali, Centenary Volume-XII; Quinn, 1997, p. 255). He urged resistance against oppression and called for individuals to realize their inner strength and contribute to a liberated future, an idea reflected in his various speeches and writings (Rabindra Bhavana Archives, Visva Bharati).

Historically, various economic approaches in India from 1950 onwards—including the growth-focused planning era (1950–1980) and subsequent market liberalization (1980–2000)—achieved some macroeconomic progress but largely failed to alleviate widespread poverty and deprivation. This exposed the limitations of trickle-down economics and a singular focus on GDP metrics over integrated social and environmental factors (O'Connell, 2002). The period from 2000 to 2015 saw a shift in discourse towards sustainability, yet persistent issues such as political and social deprivation, inequitable resource distribution, and weak institutional absorption capacities remained inadequately addressed. This was due in part to overemphasis on external funding and quantitative metrics, often at the cost of institutional quality and systemic efficiency (Elmhirst, 1975, pp. 16–25).

Tagore's practical experiments at Sriniketan, initiated in 1922, provide a relevant model for integrated rural development. These experiments emphasized agriculture, cottage industries, education, and community participation—advocating for rural self-sufficiency and collaboration with urban centres. This holistic vision, seen as a precursor to modern development strategies like Make in India, underscores the enduring relevance of Tagore's ideas (Elmhirst: *Poet and Plowman*, pp. 33–34).

The text also explores differing philosophical frameworks in economics—contrasting the Indian tradition of abundance with modern economics' focus on scarcity. This tension is central to understanding Tagore's and Coomaraswamy's advocacy for value-based development and swadeshi economics (Coomaraswamy, 1910). Additionally, the definitions of values by thinkers like Lillie and MacKenzie are essential in contextualizing human resource development as a moral and ethical endeavor.

In contemporary India, initiatives such as Nari Shakti and Mission Shakti, and NGO and SHG activities, are founded on the central idea of Atmashakti. These initiatives aim to provide complete empowerment of women with economic self-reliance, social rights, health, and leadership—extending Tagore's call for participatory and inclusive social development (Bose, 2010).

3: Missions

Individual behaviour ideally balances 'Rational Choice' for self-utility with social sympathy, integrating modern growth theory and classical moral economics for development with social justice. This study aims to foster such rational behaviour in rural human resources, engaging them in production with family and group commitment

Tagore identified societal ailments in commercialism and competition, contrasting them with traditional Indian collective welfare. He championed rural self-reliance and empowerment, emphasizing villagers' self-confidence and unity (Atmashakti) to tackle challenges independently. He believed the vital need is to install confidence in their own power, recognizing that unity makes individuals complete entities, unlike isolated, powerless portions. Overcoming feudal, colonial, and bureaucratic hurdles requires true "Panchayati-Raj and Samavaya Niti." This involves helping communities identify needs, fostering local leadership, transmitting research-based knowledge for farm and non-farm sectors, and ensuring researchers address field problems, promoting integrated collective mutual cooperation.

4: Visions

The perceptions of western idealists regarding this subcontinent can be summarized into four key aspects: a country of beggars, sages, untouchables, and natives. Embracing these concepts can make us feel proud of our Indian heritage and enhance our planning activities. Most Indians are below the poverty line, struggling for food, shelter, and clothing (Roti, Kapra aur Makan), and the requirement of education, health, and social dignity. This challenge presents two avenues for growth.

Firstly, there is significant potential in developing our primary sector with an untapped domestic market for basic needs, allowing us to focus on providing essential services. Secondly, the detachment of some sages from secular economic activities, alongside the involvement of elderly and women in religious rituals, can be viewed as a resource that, if engaged, could contribute

positively to society. The success of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) demonstrates this potential. The caste system presents another challenge, particularly regarding the untouchables, who face social mobility barriers that hinder their economic involvement. We can leverage their traditional knowledge by integrating it into vocational training and technology, enabling them to compete in the market and alleviating pressure on the agricultural sector.

Finally, the native cultural values discourage adaptability to change, in contrast to the materialism of the West. Our shared way of thinking leads to a sense of community and real socialism. It gives social support systems that lead to a life of peace. How groups behave is important in determining what people do, showing how group behaviors are needed to achieve the outcome we want.

5: Discussion

There is a fundamental difference between traditional economics (Artha-Niti) and modern economic theories. Traditional philosophy is based on abundance, believing that advances in science lead to economic prosperity, while modern thought hinges on scarcity as a catalyst for growth. Wealth, according to traditional views, is a means to access resources like land and cattle, contrasting with the modern view that sees wealth as purchasing power accumulation.

The concept of economy, defined by Aristotle as family management, emphasizes that families are the basic unit for economic analysis. However, in spite of the progress witnessed in areas like science and technology, many rural populations remain poor due to the limitations of the trickle-down effect. Ensuring even access to economic, political, and social opportunities is important in development.

Human Resource Development (HRD) has the potential to promote rural development through the development of skills, social awareness, and self-reliance. HRD is an ongoing process to empower people through proper techniques and tools. Leveraging manpower in families can significantly raise living standards, and a capital formation process converting credit into services is crucial for supporting agriculture and small industries.

Institutional credit is vital for rural development, aiding in delivering necessary services and fostering community development. Village-level microfinance institutions can be established to assess community needs effectively. The integration of profit-maximizing growth theories with moral economics is essential to ensure development alongside social justice, encapsulated by the objectives of Gram-Raj (village self-rule), Gram-Udyoug (village enterprises), and Gram-Swampoornata (village self-reliance).

Rabindranath Tagore's Sriniketan Experiment initiated in 1922 is a landmark attempt toward total rural development. Sriniketan, the Rural Reconstruction Centre of Visva Bharati, embodies Tagore's ideas and ideals about village improvement. It was started in the year 1922. Tagore's work in "village reconstruction" at Sriniketan, the Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IRR) was Tagore's attempt to put to work his ideas about village reform. Tagore wanted to develop a centre to extend his ideas on education in a rural setting. During 1914 he established a rural

reconstruction institute at Sriniketan involving youth from a group of 8 villages. Sriniketan took over the work with the objective bringing back life in its completeness to the villages and help people to solve their own problems instead of solution being imposed on them from outside. An emphasis was laid on a scientific study of the village problem before a solution was attempted.

Education: Tagore believed that education was key to the development of rural communities. He established a school called Siksha-Satra for children from neighbouring villages. He also started Lok-Siksha Samsad, an organization for non-formal education, and Siksha-Charcha to train village school teachers.

Self-reliance: Tagore wanted to teach people to be self-reliant and to help each other.

Agriculture: The project included a demonstration farm, dairy, and poultry unit. They also experimented with new crops, introduced new cattle breeds, and distributed improved seeds.

Cottage industries: The project introduced new cottage industries to supplement local incomes. They also trained local artisans in cottage industries.

Health: The project included an outdoor clinic.

Sanitation: The project focused on sanitation and health.

Fairs and festivals: The project organized fairs, picnics, games, theatre, and socio-religious activities. They also revived old festivals and introduced new ones like Vriksh Ropan (Tree Planting Festival) and Navanna (New Rice festival).

Village welfare: The project included a Village Welfare Department that focused on road, tank, and school maintenance. They also ran a circulating library.

Rabindranath Tagore's initiatives for rural self-improvement more precisely towards founding cottage industries and handicrafts around his ashram, Santiniketan, were his dreams of rural reform and entrepreneurship. His overall purpose was to help villages, and more precisely, to achieve genuine development and sustainable growth within rural economies.

Tagore promoted the consumption of "indigenously made goods" and thought the village conflicts must be settled by village settlement. He suggested the formation of a community crop bank aimed to act as a scarcity barrier and advocated women's freedom through the provision of training in variety of trades to housewives that would strengthen the economic power of their families. While Tagore had considered of independence for villages, he was against their remoteness, instead, he asserted on the acquisition of skills and the capacity to set up small industries in rural villages.

Tagore had an untiring belief that rural Indians were not to be forced to move to cities in search of a job. He anticipated a self-sufficient system where rural people were able to create and utilize their own resources. His son, Rathindranath Tagore, devoted his life toward the fulfillment of his vision for a self-sufficient rural system.

Both students and teacher at Santiniketan learned local crafts and arts. The agriculture Department investigated to determine the viability of growing new crops in the region and provided demonstration for local farmers. It also endorsed modern methods of animal husbandry. To infuse local capital, the Industries Department established new cottage industries. The Village Welfare Department, which served the concern of many villages, took care of road preservation, tanks, and schools while at the same time running a circulating library. A weaver's cooperative was established in the mid-1930s.

New celebrations like Vriksha Ropan (Tree Planting Festival) and Navanna (New Rice Festival), which are still held today, were announced along with the revival of the essence of traditional festivals. The goal was to reorganize authority and encourage villager self-sufficiency, which would eventually bring joy to village life. To achieve this, Tagore thought that academics, poets, musicians, and artist should work together. "Village and city should help each other," he said. In light of Indian's future "Make in India" goals, Tagore's projects at Sriniketan are a valuable reminder of the value of local self-reliance and urban-rural collaboration. He was clearly a visionary social campaigner who, as early as 1922, started a campaign for micro rural start-ups and was a strong supporter in the development of rural India and the Upgrading of local Craftsmen's skills to endorse self-reliance.

As a result, the location that became known as Sriniketan became the location of Visva-Bharati's second campus. Instead of forcing answers from the outside, the main goal was to allow the villagers to handle their own matters.

It's a model for development of values for human resource competence to deal with corporate beliefs and culture as a step towards excellence. Values are scientific evaluation of conduct while living in the society (-Lillie) and study of ideals involved in human life (-Machanzie). While Ethics is commitment to truthfulness and indifferent to place, person & period, it is said to be the truthfulness to commitments to the constituents based on personality, conscience and realizations. Going beyond skill to value learning would, 1) lead to optimum utilization of skills with sustenance. 2) Encourage sharing and multiplying skills at role set. 3) Enable to change habits attuned to skills. As such harmonious and cohesive existence of skill and values would be appropriate to effectiveness today.

The feasibility, range and effectiveness of manifested behaviour spring from deeper systems of values and beliefs held by the individuals require two action needs. 1) Change attitudinal values not by authority but by persuasions and dialogue. 2) Change the attitudinal values voluntarily with an enlightened self-interest point of view. We believe that as and when knowledge of science attuned to developmental values will be available to the society, abundance in economic life will be consummated. Results derived from it need to transmit the latest technology to suit requirements: a) Change in knowledge in creating awareness of the facts. b) Change in attitude through motivation, c) Change in skill through mental and manual adaptation to the desired level. Value learning techniques be developed so sensitive to national needs, constraints and

opportunities in existence within the absorptive capacity of the illiterate and poor rural beneficiaries

Atmashakti means the inner power or self-power. It is a notion deeply embedded in Indian culture and philosophy. When applied to the empowerment of women, Atmashakti indicates recognition and release of inherent woman power. Various initiatives and organizations are working in India toward the Atmashakti development of women regarding their holistic empowerment.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत / "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached"

6: Recent Initiatives:

Development Agencies:

Nari Shakti: The program is aimed at the empowerment of women in multiple spheres such as education, health, economic opportunities, and leadership to realize a society where women will have equal opportunities to avail themselves of every moment in contributing to the development of a nation.

Mission Shakti: A state government program of Odisha that empowers women through self-help groups, financial literacy, skill development, and providing access to microfinance. It has played a significant role in improving women's social and financial status.

NGOs and Civil Society Organizations:

Working especially in India, these NGOs and trusts concentrate on empowering underprivileged women, especially from tribal and Dalit groups. They give women tools, support, and instruction so they might become socially conscious and financially independent.

Often supported by government and NGOs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) empower women by giving them a forum to jointly handle their problems, save money, and apply credit.

7: Areas of Atmashakti Development for Women in India:

Education: Empowerment of girls and women depends critically on their having access to high-quality education. Projects centre on lower dropout rates, literacy promotion, and vocational training availability.

Empowering women economically means giving them chances for access to financial services, skill development, and income generating ability. In this sense, initiatives including microfinance programs and SHGs are rather important.

Health and Nutrition: Health and wellbeing for women comprise the pivot point of development for the entire family. Maternal and child health, family planning, and nutritional and anemic issues all fall under this specific concern.

Social Empowerment: Social mobilization of women for empowerment must engage the gender stereotypes, promote gender equality, and involve women in making decisions.

Leadership Development: It is important for such an empowering foundation in women's lives through becoming leaders at community and organizational level. It is the initiatives like that include leadership training, mentoring, building capacity, etc. Initiatives developed in these dimension addresses Atmashakti development of women in India focusing to carve out a society in which the woman can accomplish everything that comes to her natural endowments, contribute to her community, dignity, and respect within the community.

7.1: Atmashakti, meaning inner power or self-power, when applied to women's empowerment, has several positive outcomes:

Economic Empowerment:

Financial Autonomy: Women become financially independent through income-generating activities, microfinance, and entrepreneurship.

Improved Livelihoods: The women's skills are improved thereby providing them better job opportunities and increasing their income.

Economic Security: Financial stability generates power to decide on their lives and families.

Social Empowerment:

Increased Confidence: Atmashakti provides self-belief and confidence for women to overcome obstacles and claim their rights.

Enhanced Decision-Making: Their resource will contribute in a better way to household and community decision-making processes.

Reduced Domestic Violence: Economic independence and social empowerment have often been leading to less domestic violence.

Improved Social Status: The social status and the respect women enjoy within their communities will first increase and later ensure their social empowerment.

Health and Well-being:

Improved Health Results: Women who are empowered are naturally more inclined to put health above all and see to it that they seek care.

Better Nutrition: By enhancing their education and decision-making capacity, women will be able to raise better nutrition for themselves and their families.

Lower Maternal Mortality Rate: Healthcare and education provide women for better health care.

Community Development:

Stronger Communities: Empowered women will contribute to the general development of their communities.

Social Change: Women become agents of social change, breaking stereotypes and advocating for equality. Overall, Atmashakti empowers women to break free from traditional gender roles, improve their lives, and contribute to the development of their families and communities.

While conceiving of new concepts, one must take into account their adaptability for maximum benefit. Know-how is to be passed on to some segments of the community for practical application, and a feedback mechanism set up to learn about emerging problems for technology improvement. Agencies need to act as catalysts or change agents trying to conceive a novel concept: adoption through behavioral change at the field level. Necessary to create interest for acceptance of a specific activity in the rural society are the adaptations of new technological change: a) Qualified personnel with knowledge base of economics and technical for assessment. b) Commercial approach to collect the marketable surplus of productive sectors as savings and channelize the same to the virgin one. c) Professional management attitude with organizational framework for monitoring and control.

The basic goal of the study is to search out an ideal value absorption design. The study therefore contemplates to integrate the conflicting interests of Govt. Departments, extension services, institutions and the ultimate beneficiaries. While designing the study we have taken into account the existed, existing and exiled system in rural ethos. Therefore we have phased the study in the above manner.

8: limitation of the study

The study is heavily influenced by Tagore's idealistic vision, which, while inspirational, may lack real-world feasibility in some contexts. It relies significantly on values, ethics, and community spirit, which may not translate effectively into action without clear incentive structures or support systems. The study does not directly address modern rural issues such as: Digital divide, Climate change, urban migration, Market accessibility

These challenges require more technology-driven and policy-supported approaches than what is currently emphasized. There's an implicit assumption that rural communities are uniform in their socio-economic and cultural makeup. It overlooks intra-village inequalities such as caste, class, gender, and land ownership. The study lacks a clear monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism to assess the impact of interventions.

No specific indicators or metrics are provided to track progress. As much as it is important valuing traditional knowledge, this study does not adequately recognize modern education, innovation, and advanced technology in rural development. Successful initiatives, however, depend on changing values, attitudes, and habits, something that cannot be achieved easily without sustained motivation or systemic incentives.

Although trying to integrate the interests of many stakeholders (govt. departments, institutions, communities), the coordination of such divergent entities themselves has always been a major institutional challenge. The financial model or funding sources for the proposed initiatives are not well-articulated. There's little discussion on how village enterprises or self-help mechanisms will remain economically viable long-term. While urban-rural cooperation is mentioned, the mechanisms to ensure mutual support, market linkages, or technology transfer between the two are not elaborated.

9: Conclusion

We can usher in an age never experienced converting values into services which (i) create infrastructure so essential for agriculture, cottage & small industries (ii) make economic activities viable (iii) take care of producers' and consumers' interest, augmenting production streamlining the distribution system. As such a cohesive institutional framework of valued 'community development society' with the features of moneylender, development Banking, co-operative and NGO as well is to be coped up and by no means be individualized. Such an endeavor will ensure "Gram-Raj, Gram-Udyoug and Gram-Swampoornata"(village self-rule, village enterprises and village self-reliance) since,

The wasted human resource within family would be engaged in economic activity.

The family aptitudes of traditional and vocational knowledge would involve in economic activity without going through any formal education right now.

Dependency rate on farms would reduce and enable the family to introduce more capital in the non- farm activity resulting in higher production and productivity.

Since the overall standard of livings in the village would step-up for which the enhanced consumption necessarily create market for household products

The cohesion of the groups formed out of common socio-economic base of the families would be better having unity of respiration, thereby ensure best participatory role.

The universal hike in standard of livings would facilitate quality of human resource providing health care and education.

A subsequent effect is the family planning since child mortality rate declines and the poor would not look upon higher numbers as wage earner.

Taking into consideration the regional and social aspirations the threat to distort the groups identity is discarded and thereby strengthening our national integrity.

Gurudev Tagore in his ideal of rural reconstruction wanted to reorient the traditions for all-round regeneration of the people, so that the village life may again be flooded with a stream of happiness. In the problems of rural reconstruction it not only requires the removal of poverty but also bringing creative joy to the life of villagers. To recite with Gurudeva:

" অন্নহারা গৃহহারা চায় উর্ধ্বপানে, ডাকে ভগবানে।

যে দেশে সে ভগবান মানুষের হৃদয়ে হৃদয়ে

সাড়া দেন বীর্যরূপে দুঃখে কষ্টে ভয়ে,

সে দেশের দৈন্য হবে ক্ষয়,

হবে তার জয়।"

To be concluded with Dr. Radha Krishnan in his socialist spirituality of the 'Sloka' (stanza) of 'Maharshi Vyasa'

लोकक्षेम मंत्र / सम्पूर्ण विश्व के कल्याण का मंत्र

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ।

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु ।

मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत् ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

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