

## THE IDEA OF A MODEL VILLAGE: TOWARDS DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK TO THE STUDY OF MODEL VILLAGES

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### Introduction by Editor

*To make a “model” and then to scale it up or replicate it is an idea from the shop floor-based industry. Machines, vehicles, and tools that need to perform predetermined results need to be first designed, then modelled for their quality and eventually mass produced so that it can benefit many to achieve the predetermined results. Uniformity in the machine’s functional performance, Standardisation of production and Efficiency to ensure optimal resource utilization are values that dictate the shop floor thought process. These values are parameterized as standards of measure and these measures in term determine the “quality” of the machine. A “model” machine is evaluated for such “quality” before it is “scaled up” to be mass produced.*

*While for engineering, architecture and other sciences, ‘model’ is a very desirable way of testing a concept and for investors a way of avoiding risks, obviously when concept of “model” is applied for human collective, community or society, it raises a fundamental challenge - humans unlike machines cannot be forced towards predetermined results without being controlled – and control*

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is against the fundamental human value of freedom. So, when there is an axiomatic application of the 'model' concept to humans, we find that it hits a roadblock sooner than later. For instance, the concept of "Model Village" lacks from 'an intimate knowledge of the human element' from a Gandhian point of view.

Perhaps the first project of "Model Village" in Independent India was called the Etawah pilot project that was promoted by an American Town Planner, Albert Meyer<sup>2</sup> with the patronage of the first Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru as mentioned in this article. It is ironic and unjust that Nehru would proceed to completely ignore the wealth of experience garnered by the constructive workers and put his faith in the hands of Americans who had not a clue about Indian and its complex problems<sup>3</sup>. The project itself was conceived to prove the 'advanced' agricultural and animal husbandry technology of Americans and as such irked the Gandhian followers such as J.C. Kumarappa, JP and Kripalani<sup>4</sup> because it was more focused on proving the technology and less to do with land reforms or the self-government or regional food self-sufficiency<sup>5</sup>. A group of Gandhian workers visit the Etawah model village pilot project and arrive at a few insightful conclusions<sup>6</sup>:

- a. That it does not address a 'balanced' agricultural development and is piecemeal in its approach
- b. That it is oblivious to prevailing village industries
- c. That it ignores traditional cheaper alternatives / knowledge
- d. That it tries to promote tools that will lead to unemployment
- e. That it does not align with the Gandhian idea of Basic Education called Nai Talim
- f. That it furthers existing inequalities in the village community
- g. That it seeks to transform traditional free vocations to develop new dependencies on outside big industries
- h. That it seeks to do all this in an enormous cost which is unsustainable for a country like India
- i. That it makes the villager more dependent on the Government schemes and finally
- j. That it initiates villagers into an alien way of life

The above being a summary of the comments by the Gandhians, seems to differ from the misconceptions or mis-placed expectations from the 'model village' idea that the authors in this article point out with a case study of one village, viz., Punsari. Seventy years after the first model pilot was attempted by free India, the challenge of what a 'model' aims to achieve is left to polemical debate centred on the mechanical devices of infrastructure, facilities, technology, market linkage, etc. and leave out the human factors such as capacity to enhance livelihood, ensure freedom or assure self-reliance or self-governance. Conclusions of every model village

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*critical study eventually arrive the fact that human collectives cannot be standardised, made uniform or similarly efficient. This study too arrives at a similar conclusion. It is said in the afore referred article that when the study team asked Mr. Meyer who designed and developed the Etawah pilot as to how long does the government support such a venture, he responded saying, "for ever and ever"<sup>7</sup>. We may be saying the same about 'pilot' programmes of recent origin as well going by the conclusion that is established in this article. It is high time the Nation stepped out of the post-industrial age shop-floor mind-set of 'development' and revisited the foundations of the what was desired through the Gandhian vision of a village development that always aimed as its name indicated towards self-governance as its destination, a goal we call Gram Swaraj.*

## Introduction

The idea of model village is old, whereas the question what elements make-up a model village is still anew - and perplexing. It is new because development is a process of continuous change in a variety of aspects of human society. This change process has a tendency of always continuing from one outcome to another, encompassing multiplicity of elements in an overlapping manner. Therefore, it is perplexing to determine or explain in categorical terms, that a given society has reached the pinnacle of development. This is the complexity about understanding and explaining development. Yet, there is a way to get out of this complexity i.e., there are certain desirable standards of common facilities and quality of living that every society aspires to achieve. Often, these are official standards normatively fixed by the State<sup>8</sup> or by a global body like the UN Strategic Development Goals (SDGs)/Human Development Indicators (HDIs), etc. Reporting development using these normative scales is a commonly accepted practice of measurement.

This scale used for measuring 'a model village' necessarily has to be varying depending on the other factors that come into play such as size of the village; community composition; location-specific advantage and disadvantage; the presence or absence of external inducement and so on. The implication is that a universal scale can become confounding due to the error of some extraneous variables coming into play such as the ones mentioned above - importantly external inducement through special project assistance; socio-political forces, and location-specific advantage and disadvantage a village

experiences. That means that a given village if it has almost reached the stage of becoming a model for others to emulate or some indicators fall short by some measure, can be expressed only with certain characteristic weather, and cannot be put across in widespread terms. Therefore, development practitioners and professionals have developed a variety of scales/multiple set of indicators that provide frameworks for measurement.

One framework that professionals consider ready to fall in place is the 'disciplinary perspective' such as economic perspective, sociological or anthropological perspective; local governance perspective; Gandhian perspective<sup>9</sup> and so on. Some frameworks claim to be holistic or 'almost holistic'; others are ideology-based e.g., Gandhian concept of Gram Swaraj indicators or Marxist's tradition of social analysis, based on social structure and class analysis; and a third set could take a normative perspective such as in the popular Human Development indicators (HDI) of the UNDP. One can choose depending on the world view one believes in, and what elements of village development one considers vital. Thus, the concept and approaches to the study of a model village can be perplexing unless one delimits within the safety of a framework.

## Early Rural Development Experiments

Rural development experiments in India started even before India got independence. That means India today has more than a century of rural development experience. The early development experiments can be listed as follows: Brayne's Gurgaon Experiment in Punjab (1920); Tagore and Elmhirst's Shriniketan Experiment in West Bengal (1921); Spencer Hatch's Marthandam Experiment in erstwhile Travancore State, Kerala (1921); Rural

Reconstruction Project in Baroda (1932); Mahatma Gandhi's Sewagram Experiment in Wardha, Maharashtra (1933); Firka Development Scheme in Madras (1946); Etawah Pilot Project in Uttar Pradesh (1948); Nilokheri Experiment by S. K. Dey; Community Development Programme (1952-53). A brief account of each of this experiment can be read in 'Administration of Rural Development in India' by Hoshiar Singh (Singh, 1995).

### Unpacking 'Model Villages' from Practice

Apart from the early development experiments, a review of literature on recent models of rural development is a matter of inquisitiveness for any researcher who takes up studying the so-called 'model villages'. The following are a few models that are relatively recent and have become spoken about in the past.

- The Micro Credit model, for instance, tells us to enable flow of money into poor households, and make sure that it goes on in an uninterrupted manner into every one of the poor household, considering which, rural socio-economic development shall take place automatically. Simply put, this is household economics-oriented (Muhammad, 2008).

- Provision of Urban Facilities in Rural Areas (PURA) Model: This is about local capacity building through enabling rural areas gaining access to basic amenities. The basic proposition is achieving an increased income and better human resources through economic connectivity for rural people out of physical connectivity, electronic connectivity and knowledge connectivity (Singh, 2011).

- Anand Milk Union Limited (AMUL) is a

household economics-centered model that can in a way fit into the conceptual framework of PURA. In the sense, milk producers (any producers) who are distressed of selling milk for a non-remunerative price are organised into a cooperative society/federation, avoid middlemen and transact business. This required knowledge connectivity for processing milk, and physical connectivity for transporting milk to the point of sale, etc. (Kurien, 2005)

- Sarvam is more of a human consciousness-centered model, unlike AMUL which can be viewed as being more mechanical and business-like. Sarvam model prescribes starting any intervention from children; move on to their mothers; and then it should be possible to rope in every one of the members of the family. The dealing here is more with human sentiments, soul and the spirit. It is more personal than mechanical. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons, why Sarvam is very slow in expanding activities to the neighbourhood villages (Ramesh R., 2014).

- The Hubs and Spokes model of Prof. M. S. Swaminathan tells us that it is information asymmetry that blocks development. Educate the people on the power of information to change the socio-economic fabric of rural life; enable in all possible ways that right pieces of information reach the rural poor at opportune moments - and when people are knowledgeable enough to put information for right use, they start deriving economic benefits, which eventually results in rural development (MSSRF, 2003).

- Human Development: The concept of human development entails expanding opportunities and enlarging human choices. Enlarging choices for a person implies formation

or enhancement of capabilities. Human capabilities can be enhanced through the development of human resources through good health and nutrition, education and skill training, etc. Capabilities cannot be used unless opportunities exist to use them for leisure, productive purposes or participation in social, political or cultural affairs. Economic opportunities can be created through better access to productive resources like credit. Human choices are enlarged when people acquire more capabilities and enjoy more opportunities to use those capabilities, which will naturally result in human development (Sen, 2007).

The models of rural development reviewed so far clearly fall under two broad categories, although several other classifications can be brought about within the two. One category is that there are mental-models of development (a dream or a vision) constructed. It could be a minimal and normatively desirable development consideration like in Minimum Needs Programme; or comprehensive ones like the PURA Model or the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Model. There are others such as Mednipur model in sanitation, AMUL Model in business and SARVAM model in rural development, which have come about 'after putting together and putting through a series of small plans'; and then report how it led to achieving certain standards of development in a desirable direction. What we can infer here is that (i) in the case of the former, the model got ready mentally even before grounding it, which was later put through in action on the ground; and (ii) in the case of the latter, a series of plans led to arriving at some desirable point, which we inductively constructed as a 'rural development model'.

A review of development models gives a fair idea of how to go about analysing rural development in practice. In other words, it gives the possible directions the analysis may take us while analysing the data with our central question in mind viz., what constitutes a model village? This study makes an attempt to evolve 'a framework for reference', which can be of use to development researchers proposing to study model villages in India.

### Research Design

What constitutes a model village or what elements go into making a model village is the focus of the study. The study has used case study approach. Punsari Gram Panchayat (GP) has been taken as a case for systematically unpacking it to be able to understand and explain what constitutes a model village. The reason for selection of Punsari GP is the typicality of 'model village' Punsari supposedly has, which is widely spoken about, and referred to including by the Prime Minister of India also as a model village (Ref. SAGY Guidelines).

As discussed earlier, there are two ways of determining if a village is worthy of being addressed as a model village. One is going by the level of achievement in terms of certain normative standards; and the other approach is by comparing it with a neighbourhood village of similar characteristics. With regard to the latter, there are many studies (Vijayalakshmi, 2003, G. Palanithurai, 2005; 2008,) that have come out with the result that keeping everything else nearly constant, one factor that have invariably contributed to Gram Panchayats to emerge successful is 'leadership' provided by the Panchayat President individually or along with a small team of supporters (G. Palanithurai, 2008). The

current study has taken the former approach i.e., going by normative standards in terms of availability of and access to facilities and services, and the community perception with regard to significance and usefulness of those facilities and services.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To capture those aspects of change, which make Punsari Gram Panchayat distinct and recognisable at the national level as a 'model village'.

2. To arrive at 'a framework for reference', which can be of use to development researchers proposing to study model villages in India.

### **Framework of the Study**

Going by the common facilities-related records available in the GP Office, and the orientation of the GP President and functionaries, it was understood that enhancing the common facilities have been given top priority to in Punsari GP that it is spoken about as a model village today. The study framework also takes the same perspective to capture local development. During data analysis, the common facility norms that a Gram Panchayat must have, has been used as reference point for measurement. Firstly, for a comprehensive listing of the rural infrastructure facilities, a model village should aspire for SAGY guidelines remain as the reference point. Secondly, wherever national

standards (norms) are available, they have been kept as reference point for comparison with the actual and interpret the situation. Thirdly, going by research ethics, against whose norms should a village be judged 'model' or a practice be judged 'best'? Ideally it should be the rural people who make this judgment. They are the ones who know their needs; and they are the ones who have to use the facilities or live with the consequences of a particular intervention (Oyen, 2002).

Therefore, (i) the indicators on the sectors of development pointed out by the SAGY guidelines; (ii) the community interpretation of what Punsari is known for, and how beneficial the facilities are; and (iii) the normative Indian standards available for each sector of development (school, anganwadi, healthcare, drinking water, sanitation, etc.), have been given considered weightage when we designed the framework of this study. Within this design, the community could sufficiently voice their opinion on the functioning of the facilities created in Punsari and their usefulness. Likert's scales have been extensively used for measuring community views on usefulness of the facilities.

### **Facilities in Punsari**

Availability and access to various facilities is an important indicator of the standard of living of the people. A complete list of facilities available in Punsari is given below.:

Primary Rural Infrastructure	Secondary Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anganwadi</li> <li>• Primary Schools</li> <li>• High School</li> <li>• Drinking water for schools/anganwadi</li> <li>• Toilet at schools/anganwadis (separate for boys and girls)</li> <li>• PDS (ration shop)</li> <li>• (Piped) water supply for households</li> <li>• Individual household latrines - IHHLs</li> <li>• Pay &amp; Use public toilet near bus stop</li> <li>• Underground drainage facility</li> <li>• Primary Health Centre – PHC</li> <li>• Post office</li> <li>• No huts in the GP (All houses are either tiled or concrete)</li> <li>• Crematorium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Secondary School</li> <li>• Skill Training Centre</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Internet facility</li> <li>• State Bank of India</li> <li>• SBI - Customer Service Centre</li> <li>• ATM facility- State Bank of India</li> <li>• Biometric attendance at GP office</li> <li>• (Special) bus service (Atal Express)</li> <li>• Play ground with facilities</li> <li>• CCTV camera – GP/streets/school</li> <li>• Wi-Fi facility</li> <li>• Public address system with 120 speakers (for bajans announcements)</li> <li>• Police station</li> </ul>

### Results of the Study

The easiest thing about model village, perhaps, is to dream about one. Attempting to create a model village even on a paper is highly demanding. Issues come up from several different doors. For instance, one might ask basic facilities and services are fine, how about farm and non-farm related developments; how about rural employment generation and livelihoods diversification; how about rural arts and crafts and so on and so forth. A Gram Panchayat (GP) is recognised as a model for emulation - in this case, Punsari GP in Sabarkanta district of Gujarat.

The study of a model village can provide much interesting and relevant insights. But history is full of examples of how such studies are made for propagandistic purposes to show that their own model is the superior one in the atmosphere of political and ideological confrontation. Many researchers have taken great pains to paint their

own models in as bright colours as possible – as if everything fell in place only because of, and after the intervention. Development researchers and development practitioners in many instances played the game of comparing ideally functioning models of their own model with other systems as they function in a lesser perfect reality (Pretty, 1995) that degenerates into subjective value judgments or propagandistic statements. Therefore, in studying and emulating model villages, one needs to be alert about false comparisons and variables being unintentionally overemphasised or intentionally underplayed.

In order to understand and explain: what constitutes a model village, or what makes people call Punsari a model village, one needs to put it in certain perspective and offer an explanation. Getting into perspective demands dispelling the misconceptions about the idea of a 'model village'. Our involvement in this study corrected certain misconceptions we had about model villages. They



are given below:

**Misconception – 1:** The immediate perspective of a model village is 'a village complete in all respects'. For instance, the SAGY guideline provides a robustly exhaustive outline, which by all means, can be considered to be theoretically complete as well. It is a comprehensive framework 'to draw ideas from'. However, it is 'not a blueprint' that one should try to ground every element mentioned in it. In a study of a model village, as the study unfolds, one gets to recognise that there are several facets or strata of development. These stages tend to be gradual, progressive and often overlapping. They are not admission-restricted compartments like how rural development is dimensionally captured in a college syllabus for each department to deal in a given subject matter. It is no blueprint with certain requirements one needs to fill in, in order to qualify for a village to become 'model'. In any 'developed village', by all accounts, there could be certain elements overwhelmingly present and certain elements conspicuously absent. The point is that a model village cannot be complete in all spheres of development one might wish to see on the ground. We need a proper sense of perspective delimiting our framework, although rural problems are not discipline-restricted. As researchers, we need to delimit and have a boundary (Ramesh R., 2019).

**Misconception – 2:** There is an ultimate destination which is perfect (or pinnacle of development a village must touch) to qualify for being called a 'model village'. There is no stage called the 'pinnacle of development', the definition of which describes the ultimate destination a village must reach, so as to qualify for being called a 'model village'. One cannot say that development

practitioners and professionals are directing villages towards 'that ultimately perfect destination'. It can be any comprehensive listing like it is given in SAGY guidelines, or the norms given under Human Development Index, it is always relative and progressive, with a possibility for further perfection. Mahatma spoke about Gram Swaraj, meaning a village as independent and inter-dependent republic. This is about establishing a system of rural governance (Gandhi, 2009). It is not about ultimate destination. It's not a run towards the finish-line. Therefore, by one scale, a village could be addressed as developed, and by another it could be measured as lacking (Ramesh R., 2019).

This is based not only on our experience in trying to understand and explain Punsari Gram Panchayat, but also is the reality in measuring nations, based on Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is constantly evolving, and the indices are relentlessly being made better and sharpened year after year since 1990. The best brains in the world are working on constructing the indices and measuring human development. We are not fully convinced as yet, that here is a completely perfect set of indices that measure development absolutely flawlessly. In the last 25 years, we have developed robust tools, but not one that can be claimed as 'totally perfect'. The minimal required is holding a perspective and determining 'a framework to understand and explain'. This study on Punsari model Gram Panchayat is being viewed from the 'rural infrastructure' perspective.

Taking an infrastructure standpoint can be done in a robust way with normative standards available to measure, coupled with community perception and satisfaction of the common facilities.

**Basic Identity:** This is a common minimum every citizen must possess. The three basic identities of citizenship one can think of, in the Indian context are: (i) Aadhar card; (ii) Voter ID card; and (iii) Family ration card. In addition to these, a recent addition after the introduction of MGNREGA is the 'job card'. The possession of these four IDs [including the job card from MGNREGA], besides providing identity for an individual, can enable entitlements - including social security - of several types to a poor family.

There are studies that have established that the ration card and the MGNREGA job card serve as the lifeline of some poor families in rural areas (Ramesh G. P., 2008). Therefore, there is a high correlation one can draw between non-possession of certain identity cards and to the chances of a person being denied certain entitlements and the social security arrangements. In Punsari Gram Panchayat, it was found that almost everyone holds an aadhar card, ration card, and voter ID. A considerable number of families (600 families) also have MGNREGA job card and bank accounts. Therefore, the basic identity is unquestionably clear. There can be no problem about accessing basic entitlements such as getting essential commodities from Public Distribution System (PDS) or making social security claims.

**Basic Infrastructure:** Going by the national standards/officially established norms when we verify the common and individual facilities available (in schools, anganwadis, Primary Health Centre (PHC), drinking water supply, sanitation facilities at household and community levels, etc.), it reveals that Punsari GP has all the primary infrastructure a Gram Panchayat is expected to have as per norms and standards followed by Government of India

such as under the Right to Education, Rural Water Supply, Indian Public Health Standards, etc.

The Extra Infrastructure that Makes Punsari Extraordinary: Observably, what has put Punsari GP on a higher pedestal is not mere provision of basic infrastructure facilities, and their uninterrupted functionality; rather certain uncommon facilities have singled this Gram Panchayat out as outstanding. Certain exceptional facilities we find are computers in the local government-run schools with software for children to learn play way, TV with a VCD player, public address system regularly used for information as well as educational purposes, CCTV camera in several places covering also the schools, ration shop, and Wi-Fi connectivity in the village, etc. All these go beyond what the official norms require causing eye brows raise. These extra make Punsari extraordinary in eyes of any visitor to Punsari. The GP becomes spoken about.

Pay and use toilet at the bus stand and a special bus service (Atal Bus Service, named after the former Prime Minister of India Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee), especially for transporting milk out of the village, and for the sake of school children, is a good arrangement, which normally one does not expect to be present at GP level. Similarly, a training centre within the village for school drop outs to train them in some hands-on-skills such as computer operation, tailoring, embroidery, etc. Apart from the facility of a State Bank of India branch and an ATM, Punsari has Customer Service Point of SBI which is open even after the bank-hours. These are really extraordinary (economic infrastructure) facilities within the Gram Panchayat. There are also women SHGs working in the village, that make use of the services of the SBI branch. Theoretically, presence of these facilities

must enhance the standard of living/quality of the people. Given the conditions in Punsari, there is no reason to think about a rival explanation as to why practically it may not happen. However, community perception was also sought for the purpose of understanding the usefulness of these facilities.

**Community Perception:** Making facilities available and providing access to certain common infrastructure facilities are important aspects in gearing up rural development. If common facilities are made available and accessible, it is natural that people shall use them, which will cascade into several development fortunes. Yet, an extensive enquiry was made to find out community perception and satisfaction.

We find that overall satisfaction of the people on various facilities is very positive, as most people are 'very satisfied' about most of the facilities. Only the 'facilities for playing' is reported to be slightly at 'somewhat satisfied' state on a five-point Likert scale. There is almost none who have expressed dissatisfaction with the facilities/services.

There are certain facilities that are uncommon or unusual in other places. To what extent people attach importance to these facilities matter as well. Importance goes with awareness on the benefits of such facility, and their use value. An enquiry into this aspect of development revealed that almost all the facilities such as library, internet, CCTV camera, and public address system are considered either 'very important' or at least 'somewhat important'. The minibus service is used not only for the convenience of people, but also for transporting the milk produced at Punsari. Only a very negligible few have mentioned that some of the facilities such as internet and CCTV camera are not important, or unnecessary.

**Extent of Development Achieved:** In terms of the extent of development achieved, it was found that facilities such as supply of safe drinking water in adequate quantity; quality of school education; health care; use household toilet – nobody goes for open defecation; general cleanliness are admirable. The time taken by GP for redressing the grievance or attending to a complaint has come down to a great extent, which is noticeable from the register maintained for 'Public Complaints and Redressal'. Theoretically speaking, one can argue that presence of these facilities, obviously, must contribute to enhanced livelihoods; improved incomes and better quality of life. This study has probed the presence/absence of infrastructure facilities, and community members' expression of use and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Possibly, one limitation of this study is that it has not measured the contribution of these facilities to the livelihoods or income levels of households.

#### **In Essence – What does Punsari offer to development literature?**

Trying to answer this question with an analogy would provide better clarity. We take the idea of 'micro credit and group lending' for an analogy. The essence or the central idea of 'Micro Credit Programme' is if you take care of household economics by creating a mechanism for uninterrupted money flow into households, rural economic development shall automatically take place. Now, where do we get this money from, is a question that has been answered (group savings + bank credit); and how do we enable money flow into households (through productive loans); how do we make it uninterrupted (prompt repayment through peer-pressure), and so on are all addressed.

This model works world-wide. This model could prove even a skeptic-banker that the poor are bankable. What made this concept succeed was the principle has been put to use with several different contextual modifications to suit varying community mindsets and abilities in different villages, regions and continents. It was not a blue print operationalised all over the world; rather it is the basic tenets and undercurrent that made the operational mechanism robust; and the micro credit programme a thumping success world over.

Similarly, what is the central idea (bottom-line) of Punsari model? Focus on basic rural infrastructural facilities like providing safe and adequate drinking water; basic health care facilities; schooling of children; arrangement for regular street cleaning; household toilets for every house – which implies that Punsari Panchayat performs what the Article 243 G in the Eleventh Schedule of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act demands from a Gram Panchayat. Through this performance, the Panchayat has secured its place as a regular FUNCTIONAL Gram Panchayat. Secondly, going further beyond the basics to provide next level facilities such as skill training facility within the village, public address system, internet, library, CCTV cameras, banking beyond the bank hours, ATM at village level, Punsari has become a SPOKEN-ABOUT Gram Panchayat from an outsider's point of view. These secondary facilities have made this village extra-ordinary/special. One undercurrent that is glaringly visible, though not exposed openly is that the Punsari Gram Panchayat Sarpanch is politically connected, and has high social standing. The weighted average of the community satisfaction also has shown more than 4 scores on a 5 point scale indicating that people are 'fully satisfied' about the entire facilities available in the Panchayat.

Enabling development to take place by persistently expanding rural infrastructure theoretically means providing the enablement required or creating the eco-system needed for development to take shape. This, in turn, shall reflect in child development, quality of education, nutrition, agriculture, credit support, market linkage, eased economic transactions, overall well-being and in the quality of life and so on. The sustainable functioning of the infrastructure created has been ensured through arrangements such as 'management by GP', 'management by SHGs', and 'management through private sector'/'government sector involvement' etc.

### Conclusion

In trying to understand a model village, the first thing we need to be clear about is that the very idea of a model village is notional. It is a frame of mind/a mental state – or a composed perspective/intellection. Some villages after a prolonged engagement provide the essentials for building certain line of argument that become 'definitional of a model village.

This study has come out with a framework for reference to those who would want to study model villages in India. One central learning-point from this study is we cannot speak about model villages sans the socio-political context. From each model village, we may be able to construe 'the constituents' that illustrate or typify a model village. There cannot be one hallmark or unvarying visage which we can label as model village for making nation-wide carbon copies. Yet, we must recognise the attributes; document the processes that led to certain characteristics that singled a village out, as pick of the bunch.

A model village, by and large, does provide a concoction which may or may not be replicable; or it can be viewed as a version or pattern as an exemplar that are illustrative. A version that contains several significant developmental fortunes, and renders itself uncomplicated for scaling up becomes sought-after, like the Micro Credit model of Bangladesh. Perhaps, this is what they call maximum benefit for maximum number of people (in 'Benefit Maximisation Axiom' in sociological theories). However, there is always this danger of some elements being missed out unintentionally, which one needs to be wary about. Most often, this relates to the 'contextual factors' such as the socio-political standing of the Sarpanch in reference in this case.

This is based on the premise that each village is different in terms of problems; resource availability; locational advantage/disadvantage; community capabilities and mindset; and more than anything else, the 'local leadership' and so on. Therefore, we are going to be imprudent in our attempt, if we attempted providing blanket-type ingredients that go into making constituents of a model village. We can draw lessons from some of the existing model villages – not only of Punsari's, but also of others'. It will not be methodological - rather mythological - if we try to replicate Punsari as an example, not taking into cognisance the socio-political context in which it has operated – including the political patronage that a given Sarpanch is able to draw, and the resultant official support.

Punsari has operated in a certain socio-political context, which is improbable to be the same all over – even within Gujarat. The best validation to this statement could be an article titled:

'Revisiting Midnapore Model after ten years of Total Sanitation Campaign in India' by Taposik Banerjee et al., from National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies, New Delhi. Midnapore Model of sanitation promotion was well acclaimed ten years ago, and prescribed by the Government of India for adopting that model all over India. Ten years after, these authors have revisited the whole thing again and have come back to tell us 'why Midnapore Model did not succeed in other places. They say: 'probably there are several contextual elements that we overlooked during replication of Midnapore Model'. The question is: why did those researchers and authors – not one or two but many - who then studied and recommended Midnapore Model for replication, fabulously made-up and glorified Midnapore Model? Did they fail to notice the contextual factors; or they all had a temperament to overemphasise, understate, or completely dismiss things that might go against what the mainstream thinking was at that time?

The study of a model village can provide much interesting and relevant insights. But history is full of examples of how such studies are made for propagandistic purposes to show that their own model is the superior one in the atmosphere of political and ideological confrontation. Many researchers have taken great pains to paint their own models in as bright colours as possible – as if everything fell in place only because of, and after the intervention. Development researchers and development practitioners in many instances played the game of comparing ideally-functioning models of their own model with other systems as they function in a less perfect reality (Pretty, 1995) that degenerates into subjective value judgments or propagandistic statements. Therefore, in studying

and emulating model villages, one needs to be wary of false comparisons and how variables are interpreted/manipulated.

Thus, let us not make attempts providing blanket-type ingredients that go into making of a model village. Perhaps, what is intelligible is, we can deduce the characteristics that Punsari has to offer as constituents of a desirable pattern. And certain principles and values that Punsari considered

non-negotiables during the process of creating Punsari version of development. All said and done, we may have to go for a participatory plan with the community wherever we propose to make an intervention, bearing in mind the principles and values that facilitated transformation of Punsari Gram Panchayat - or any model village for that matter - rather than recommending that model to be adopted as a blueprint. Perhaps, that sounds an intelligible proposition.

#### NOTES

1. J.C.Kumarappa, "Community Projects", GUP, Sept 1952. Quoted in the Web of Life, p. 305
2. Albert Meyer, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert\\_Mayer\\_\(planner\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Mayer_(planner))
3. The Web of Freedom, Deepak Malghan and Venu Govindu, p. 302
4. Ibid. p. 305
5. Ibid. p. 306
6. The Truth about Etawah, Thakurdhas Bhang and Suresh Ramabhai, EPW, May 31, 1952
7. The Truth about Etawah, Thakurdhas Bhang and Suresh Ramabhai, EPW, May 31, 1952, p. 451
8. These include National Development Goals at the macro level; Outcome Budget in any given sector; and at the grassroots level norms for drinking water supply per person per day; teacher student ratio; section teacher ratio; doctor-patient ratio; Body Mass Index; standard height and weight chart for boys / for girls and so on.
9. 'Gandhian Thought' is an academic study and a discipline in itself.

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