



Swaraj Samvad 7th- 9th January 2025, New Delhi

Key Takeaways

A three-day deliberation among more than 400 members from different stakeholders (community, CSOs, philanthropies, development communicators, etc) gathered at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi to discuss key barriers in achieving sustainability, particularly for rural India, more so for remotely located Indigenous hubs. Solutions are always with the indigenous wisdom, the only need is to inculcate them with appropriate modern technology. The innovations that various organizations have been trying in various pockets of India were put forward for joint discussion and deliberation.

Discussions revealed that current development processes are experiencing significant setbacks due to a lack of trust among various stakeholders, including individuals, families, communities, civil society organizations (CSOs), governance, leadership, and the market. The foundations of swaraj are rooted in trust and equity. Today, this relationship is characterized by a hierarchy of knowledge, finance, influence, or strength. As a community, we have stopped appreciating our treasure, leading to silos that hinder meaningful communication and collaboration. Phrases like “I am because you are” have shifted to “You are because I am.” This shift is evident in our interactions with the community, to the point where people and institutions regard farmers as unskilled, poor, and burdensome to society. Such perceptions, particularly toward Indigenous farmers who are essential to our nutrition and health, represent significant barriers to establishing balanced power relationships. All of this contributes to degradation across all dimensions of development, including ecology, social justice, and the economy, thereby affecting sustainable development.

In the current environment of mistrust, disbelief in what we have, misleading narratives, and unequal relationships, there is a pressing need to reclaim Swaraj at the self, community, and global levels. The first is “Buddha,” referring to the self, which demands internal transformation. This will progress to Sangha – the development of knowledge – characterized by creativity and innovation, followed by an organization that can lead to Sangathan, which facilitates community control over resources, a fundamental aspect of empowerment. Empowerment is defined as the acquisition of capacity by all to withstand adversities.

Bridging the gaps created by our insular silos is a foundational principle of Swaraj, achievable through partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders, from the community to government and even the market. There is an urgent need to evolve Swaraj lenses and frameworks that can assist in assessing existing narratives, relationships, programs, tools, thoughts, languages, and other manifestations. This will necessitate the following immediate actions.

To reclaim Swaraj as community stewardship, we must initiate the “**Swaraj Movement**” as a multifaceted movement reaching out to various stakeholders through **Samvad** (Dialogue) initially and later cocreating a free access **Swaraj Repository**. It will require the creation of two wheels of *Netratva* (leadership) through *Swaraj Shala* and *Sansadhan* (resources) through the *Swaraj Fund*.

So that it can facilitate reclaiming and spreading “*Swaraj as a pathway of Sustainability.*” In this direction, we seek your kind contribution in terms of sharing understanding and suggestions to move further.