

Vision for Progressive Rural India – A Model

Rural India, filled with its unique beauty and charm, is home to 65% of the nation's population. Its lush green fields, organically grown produce, fresh milk, simplicity, spirituality, and cooperation among peoples, clean air and bright sparkling stars against clear blue skies evoke memories of opportunity and boundless freedom. But as India's bustling urban centers fight to join the ranks of global metropolitan megacities, the basic developmental needs of villages are being neglected. Many of them still lack essential affordable social services and infrastructure (e.g. education, healthcare, clean water, Intranet etc.). Unfortunately, the charm of living countryside is slowly fading away. Recently a shift noticed as peoples suffering and suffocation in the city and the fear of the pandemic has prompted migrants to try to rebuild their lives in their villages. This is yet to be seen if villages can become a part of new growth story by reviving traditions and agro based economy.

The growing wealth gap between the rich and poor is no secret. The disparity is more prominent when compare with the general standard of living between those in the city and in the village. But individuals who have achieved social mobility can help facilitate rural development and empower people with the skills and knowledge needed to sustainably bridge this gap. As compassionate and caring human beings, this is our responsibility. Taking the opportunity to remain close to our roots, setting a positive example for future generations, practicing Seva (giving) and fulfilling our lives and making the world a better place.

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita highlights austerity (tapa), charity (dana), sacrifice (yagna) and service (Seva) as the foundations of any well-functioning society. In the spirit of this teaching, I would like to encourage like-minded individuals who are willing to dedicate some of their time, resources, and skills towards a shared vision of a progressive rural India. This would entail improving conditions for the most impoverished groups and supporting the vulnerable populations. I pledge to direct my efforts toward these progressive activities and preserving the heritage in **Fatehpura**, Jalaun, Uttar Pradesh in India, my birthplace and childhood home. The strength and happiness of a community is a direct reflection of those who help build it, so I encourage every willing and able person, to contribute in their own way.

The hope is that these initiatives will inspire and support people to explore their individual potentials and encourage a shift in attitude towards building strong communities through positive, caring interactions, and mutual respect and love and (i) develop the strength to serve others, (ii) cultivate compassion to treat others with dignity and respect, and (iii) gain confidence and courage to lead a life of a strong character.

Following projects/initiatives are planned to be undertaken (in person or virtual) to serve our mission of overarching goal of enhanced social well-being of individuals, families and community.

Initiatives / Activities / Development Projects	Purpose & Assessment
A: Educational Support	
1. Mentorship, coaching and vocational training of children/youths to help them achieve their full potential and live a meaningful life.	Skill & knowledge acquisition (growth); goal setting, the pursuit (imagination), balanced life-style, a successful career and meaningful life. Increased literacy skills and longing for Learning.
2. Organize Tutorials/workshops that model completion of tasks, engaging, and empowering participants from different demographic backgrounds. Use examples of their interests to encourage them to pursue their dreams.	
3. Establish a local library and programs for cooperative skill/knowledge sharing. Share the literature from other institutions, groups & NGOs.	
4. Construct reasonable lodging facilities for higher education in cities.	
5. Provide education on national, social, and spiritual festivals/celebrations.	
6. Example based Education on modern and ancient agricultural practices.	
7. Education on use and misuse of ancient and modern technologies (cell phone, internet, computer, social media, etc.).	
8. Establish or connect with motivational guest speaker series (in person or virtual): – Forces, Teachers, Engineers, Doctors, Administrations, Railways, Agriculturalists, and other private & public sector employees/retirees	
9. Build Bathroom facilities and other amenities in schools and villages.	

10. Develop ancient cultural/heritage museum in village to preserve artifacts.	Preserve and prevent heritage
11. Career/ Education Counseling: Advice on resume development, career and interviews planning within India and abroad. Assistance in college/ universities, VISA, Passport, Aadhar Card applications and follow-up, etc.	Empower and help people to become satisfied & happy contributing citizens
B: Health and Wellness	
1. Work towards providing a basic health care access (medicine and health care providers, support from local leader funds and Governments).	Improved health of individual, honour for healthcare givers and increase the life expectancy. Webinar/Seminar series.
2. Encourage the use of ancient yogic practices, ayurvedic medicines, home remedies, and living a balanced and healthy lifestyle in schools etc.	
3. Create awareness on adverse impacts of drug and/or alcohol addictions.	
4. Liaise (e.g. write letters) with government agencies and provide individuals counseling to resolve their day-to-day life issues and conflicts.	Growth, saving, development, and resolution of conflicts
5. Establish shelters and subsidized Annapurna/Mankanthi kitchen to ensure that everyone has food and warm clothes and nobody sleeps hungry.	Happy and healthy living
6. Connect with groups/hospitals for medical treatments and fund raising.	Improved wellness and smooth transitioning from life challenges
7. Counsel/work on grief management protocols for life tragedies.	
8. Support developing field and equipments for sports to promote health.	Better health, wellness, and happiness and reduce illness
9. Encourage a healthy and balanced lifestyle – workshops, tournaments	
C: Financial Wellness and Agricultural Growth	
1. Financial support for those with the greatest need to support: (i) education, (ii) health (sickness), (iii) weddings, (iv) after-death rituals, (v) loan repayment, (vi) agriculture and farm equipment, (vii) food and shelter, and (viii) cooperative business and industrial development.	The collective sense of security, charity (giving), acceptance, and cohesiveness in society
2. Create awareness of Government Schemes and their implementations: (i) Insurances: life, animal and crop (ayushman yojna etc.) (ii) Personal bank accounts & savings (iii) Natural energy source (e.g. solar, wind, biofuel, etc.), (iv) Issues of water conservations, water pollution, waste disposal (v) Loan acquisition and repayment options (vi) Responsibilities and Rights of citizens, (vii) Navodaya school, (viii) Agriculture, and (ix) Politics etc.	Improvement in financial independence, environmental health, and more positive engagement in civic amenities and make use of the available service to empower the self
3. Promote and facilitate agricultural growth and efficiency (seed to market)	Increase agricultural income
4. Promote immigrations & development in India by overseas Indians.	Pravasi Bhartiya activities
D: Spiritual and Social Enrichment	
1. Temple maintenance and regular (nitya, niyमित पूजा, prabhat pheri, Ram / Krishna Lela) religious satsang – Gita, Ramayan, Bhagavat, Kitan.	Oneness, social, spiritual, and community engagement. Prepare to cope up with life challenges.
2. Support cow/animal shelters to help promote value-based living.	
3. Facilitate spiritual journeys (yatras) to Religious places (e.g. Mathura, Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Varanasi, Hardwar, Kumbh, Prayagraj etc.).	Broaden the perspectives and drive to a meaningful life.
4. Explore and preserve local natural heritage sites and conserve pond.	Cultivating the value of Heritage, Culture, and Diversity and potential increase of tourism.
5. Promote and preserve local talents (music, phag, achari, craft, etc.).	
6. Develop documents with spiritual, cultural, and heritage values.	
7. Implement projects (i.e. Youth day) to strengthening community bonds	Cohesive community
8. Workshops/counseling on how to: lead a meaningful life, spirituality, craft parenting, science, logic, leadership, culture, heritage, respectful dealings.	Conflicts managed and more moral and cohesive living with helping hands (safety, dignity)
9. Cordial Goodwill development Programs/seminars for all interest groups.	
E: Environmental Awareness and Engagement	
1. Awareness on importance of environmental preservation, tree plantation, water usage, solar energy, resource optimization/conservations, and climate changes.	Greener Village and preservation of the environment.
2. Encourage people to make a difference by serving others through swadharm and volunteering to restore habitat (e.g. tree planting). Develop a sense of gratefulness, and respect for ancestors. Inspire our children by taking action and developing natural monuments (trees, ponds, volunteering time and skills for sharing and caring etc.) and/or selfless services.	A holistic and sustainable approach to nurture and maintain a cohesiveness and build a strong community with morale.

