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# **Development and 'Swaraj': Case study of an Indian Village**

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## **Declaration**

I, Manali Bisht, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for the award of any type of academic degree.

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Date: May 14, 2023

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## Abstract

Over the last century, many development scholars have criticised the Western model of development. These scholars argue that the Western development model has damaged the environment, increased capitalism, promoted inequitable development and increased inequality among the nations. Several alternate development approaches such as 'Degrowth', 'Eco-Swaraj', 'Pluriverse', 'Buen Vivir' have been suggested by these development scholars, that advocate the relationship between society, nature, well-being, and development. These theories focus on indigenous knowledge, regional development, village autonomy, self-sufficiency etc.

This thesis is exploring the practicality of alternate development theories on ground with a focus on 'Swaraj' in the Indian development context. To observe the ground reality and people's perceptions and aspirations of development, a case study is done in a village named Kaluwala, in Uttarakhand state of India. The study is done from January 2023 to February 2023. Semi-structured interviews were the main method for data collection. The information is gathered from people belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds such as farmers, teachers, construction workers, politicians, women, representatives of village council. For interpretation of data, observations and unstructured conversations with people living and working in Kaluwala have been used.

This thesis finds that many grassroot volunteer-based development programmes are active in village Kaluwala, where people are participating actively. However, this cannot be called 'Swaraj', as most of these programmes are implemented and executed by the government, thus making them Top-down approaches, rather than Bottom-up approaches, as opposed to the ideas of alternating development theories such as 'Swaraj'.

The findings also suggest that people in Kaluwala are not aware of alternate development approaches, and they could not imagine development without government help and services. Even though the prevailing development constructs are contested by scholars, the conventional notions of development seem to be embedded in the minds of people from Kaluwala.

There was also an asymmetry in the feedback regarding the information and access to the schemes and facilities available to take benefit of. This shows the mismatches between formal development plans and the local aspirations which again goes against the concept of cooperation in 'Swaraj', where people are expected to come together for their betterment and development. In the village, there was no participation of villagers in policy making for development of the village, or any way to capture their ideas, feedbacks, or suggestions.

However, in Mahatma Gandhi's conceptualisation of 'Swaraj', local communities are supposed to take decisions for their development.

This thesis highlighted the practicality of alternate development approaches, especially 'Swaraj' in the village Kaluwala. The implementation of these alternative development policies and theories needs to be studied on a wider level, with practical approaches, keeping in mind the different development needs for different villages and communities in the World. The gap between the real world and academia needs to be reduced so that the impact of research generates some real results on ground level.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CAG: Comptroller and Auditor General of India

FERA: Foreign Exchange Regulation Act

FYP: Five-Year Plans

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GOI: Government of India

INR: Indian National Rupee

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IRDA: Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India

IRDP: Integrated Rural Development Program

MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

MP: Member of Parliament

MRTP: Monopolistic and Restrictive Trade Practices

NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NITI: National Institution for Transforming India

OBC: Other Backward Class

RED: Radical Ecological Democracy

SC: Scheduled Castes

SEBI: Securities and Exchange Board of India

SEWA: Self Employed Women's Association

SHG: Self-Help Groups

ST: Schedule Tribes

USA: United States of America

USD: United States Dollar

WB: World Bank

## **1. Introduction:**

### **1.1 Opening and Research Problem**

According to E. B Hurlock, 1959, as cited in Pimenta, 2016, “Development means a progressive series of changes that occur in an orderly, predictable pattern as a result of maturation and experience.” (Hurlock, 1959, as cited in Pimenta, 216, p.3). These progressive changes include conditions such as good education, good health, equality, social values, economic stability, political and civil rights such as liberty of expression, liberty of public speaking, freedom of political choice etc. In the words of Amartya Sen, “Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as repressive states” (Sen, 2001, p. 3) These influences relate directly to economic poverty, hunger, insufficient nutrition, lack of health access and social imbalances. (Sen, 2001).

Over the last century, the world has been dominated by a Western understanding of development, which has been largely adopted by the countries in the Global South. While this western ideology of development has helped to pull millions of people out of poverty, it is also said to have damaged the environment, promoted inequitable development, and increased wars and inequality across different parts of the world. The existing global capitalist system has also, in many instances contributed to increasing economic dependency, exploitation, immiseration, and backwardness of developing countries. Work such as Walter Rodney’s ‘How Europe Underdeveloped Africa’, Alden et al.’s ‘The Western way of Development: A critical Review, ‘Alternate Development approaches’ by development scholars and several other articles confronted the toxic powers of Western world and how they influenced developing countries. According to these development scholars, the development regime today is created by colonial capitalism and by bourgeois nationalism (Ludden, 1993).

The western conception or model of development has been heavily criticised in recent years by economists such as Ashish Kothari, Arturo Escobar, Amartya Sen, and many others researchers who are calling for a complete re-think on how we conceive and approach development. In particular, these economists have called for development policies that place indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and human well-being at the core of their conception of development (Kothari, 2014).

According to Ashish Kothari:

The western development model is a mental construct adopted by (read imposed upon) the rest of the world that need to be deconstructed (Latouche, 2009). Development might thus be seen as a toxic term to be rejected (Dearden, 2014), and thus, "sustainable development' an oxymoron. (Kothari et al., 2014, p.366).

Thus, more and more scholars today are calling for the creation of another paradigm to measure growth, where every individual and community has the power to take decisions and make a change by keeping in mind the value of ecological sustainability and human equity. Scholars have promoted several alternate development models such as El Buen Vivir, Radical ecological democracy, Direct democracy, Degrowth etc. These approaches challenge the western way of development, and promote the importance of culture and nature, indigenous knowledge, self-reliance, participation of people, autonomy, solidarity, equity, decentralisation etc. in promoting development.

Given this background, India, which is dealing with multiple challenges such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, high population, etc. can be a good case study to understand the practicality and adoption of such alternative development models. The Indian development model is inequitable in extreme with very high levels of inequality and the country still has cases where people die of hunger and do not have health access. Millions of people still do not have access for necessities of life such as nutritious and adequate food, clean water, sanitation, health access, shelter. On top of this there are many challenges associated with gender inequality, casteism and untouchability.

If we study the history of development in India, it is important to mention that Indian development planning did not exist in colonial times. Before 1947, India was under British rule, and in 1950, the planning commission assumed the responsibility of making policies for development. In the present period, the main objective for Indian development is to plan and coordinate welfare policies that effectively help poor people come out of poverty. While recent decades have seen growth in figures such as GDP per capita, we must also ask whether all social and caste groups in India have been able to access the fruits of this development, or whether women are able to emerge from deeply embedded patriarchal structures to assume

control of their own homes and finances because of these developmental policies (Drèze et. al, 1997).

While alternate development concepts such as ‘Swaraj’ have received a lot of attention in academia, it is important to study whether these alternative approaches are actively present at the ground level and whether they can effectively mount a challenge to the western model of development as portrayed by some developmental economists. This thesis will thus study the conceptualization and execution of Indian development schemes in the light of swaraj (Drèze et. al, 1997).

This thesis presents a case study of village Kaluwala in District Dehradun of Uttarakhand, focusing on the experiences of farmers, women, politicians, panchayat workers, poor people, and their respective experiences in terms of development. We will also look at public policies that are currently running in the village, the conditions of education, health, women, and social equality in the past few years. Through this study, we will examine whether these alternative development models or ways of looking at development, which have generated such excitement in academia, are actually able to challenge the dominant models of development on the ground, in a typical Indian village. We will also investigate whether these ideas of development resonate with or are understood by the villagers. Thus, we are not only trying to search for the existence of these alternative development models, but we are also investigating whether people’s imaginations and aspirations can conceive of such alternative approaches.

**1.2 Research Statement:** This research project is centred around conceptualisation and execution of Indian development schemes in light of alternate development theories such as ‘Swaraj’. The key questions that I would like to investigate revolves around the degree of people’s participation in development plans of Government of India. The goal is to study people’s participation and involvement in governmental developmental policies as-is. This can be done with reviewing and familiarizing with how things work at present.

I will try to answer questions such as: Are the schemes catering the needs and requirements of people? To what degree the village community and the common citizens are involved in the conception and execution of these plans and policies? How much of these development policies are top-down vs. bottom-up? I will try to answer these questions by reviewing the existing literature and will then do a case study of a village named Kaluwala in Uttarakhand state of India to review and critique the schemes and policies in action. The focus of this thesis is on

investigating whether concepts such as ‘Swaraj’ and other development theories suggested by different scholars exist at the ground level in India.

### **1.3 Research Questions:**

**RQ1:** How do the alternate development models and practices such as ‘Swaraj’ ensure participation and self-reliance at the local level (the one village chosen as a case study)?

#### **SUB RQs:**

1. What does theory say about the impact of bottom-up development and local level participation in both decision-making and execution in alternate development outcomes?
2. How are the Indian government's village-level development policies structured and executed?
3. How much is local community involved in conceiving and executing the development projects that affect their village and who all are involved and how?
4. How do locals envision development and how do these visions fit with swaraj (do they want to be self-reliant, are there arrangements that allow them to be self-governed)?
5. If there are mismatches between formal development plans and local aspirations, how can the mismatches be reduced/eliminated?

I will also try to give suggestions for improvement and will try to answer the following question:

**RQ2:** What can be done to increase the efficiency of these models/schemes especially considering the concept of 'Swaraj' as discussed in the works of Ashish Kothari?

**1.4 Limitations of the Study:** My study is limited to one village because of time and scope constraints. I chose to study Kaluwala as it is a village that participates actively in community work and has a number of operational self-help groups. Since I have studied only one village, albeit a representative one, it is important to mention that in a country as vast as India, there is considerable scope for differences and variation. So, the key limitation of this study is that I have generalised the findings generated from one single village. Nevertheless, I believe that this study is valuable for throwing some light on the Indian development approaches to development and the thoughts and aspirations of people in the local area in this part of Uttarakhand state. The attempts to generalise my findings are done because of the limited scope



and limited time for the study and multiple studies with a wider scope and coverage are suggested as a follow-up. My findings and conclusions should be seen in relation to this.

Secondly, my research is based on interviews with people from different sections of village Kaluwala. I took 20 interviews during my fieldwork, but I have limited my results by only including 12 of them, because they were fairly representative of the typical mindset of villagers. For further research, it would be interesting to see if the people who have not participated in my study, have different views and aspirations for village development.

## **2. Background:**

Over the last few decades, the western development paradigm has come in for increasing criticism for being an ideology of the West. According to Ziai, "Development promises material affluence to decolonizing countries in Africa and Asia to prevent them from joining the communist camp and maintaining a colonial division of labour" (Ziai, 2017, p.2). Many scholars such as Ashish Kothari, Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva and others have criticized 'Development paradigm' as the ideology of the west. Another study by E. Lander shows that this development crisis is triggered by a particular approach or model of civilization named modern capitalism. This study asserts that capitalism determines economic structures, and involves practices, policies, social and public relations. This crisis goes beyond the financial concern, by integrating climate disasters, cultural homogenization, loss of values, and abolition of indigenous values and traditions (Lander, 2000). According to many scholars, developed countries have outrightly rejected the non-western, non-industrialized ways. The motive is to promote capitalism in developing countries. However, the ecological consequences of 'developed-western' ways are disastrous. Consumption of resources, materialism, exploitation of the environment has increased a gap between rich and poor countries. This concern has received much attention worldwide and many agree on the necessity to tackle this. Even though there is no homogenous position about the solutions that need to be undertaken, but some alternative development approaches that promote ecological sustainability, regional knowledge, indigenous ways of living are being proposed by some scholars (Ziai, 2017).

As my thesis deals with India, it is crucial to study about India's economic development literature, growth trajectory and the development policies. This section will provide a discussion of the evolution of development policy making in India.

### **2.1 Evolution of Development Policy making in India:**

**1. Evolution of Development (1950s and 1960s):** After independence from British Rule in 1947, India remained a closed economy till nearly four decades to make the country self-sufficient. The key goal was to mimic the development trajectories of ‘Developed and advanced’ industrialised nations, while keeping the frameworks of self-reliance and import substitution in place. The post-colonial development policy framework took inspiration from the soviet model of development that focussed on high investment in capital goods sector to promote high growth rate in the longer run. The socialist ideals defined India’s own understanding of post-colonial development. During this era, trade received very little attention as it was characterised by pervasive import and exchange control. The import duties were increased, and the export was neglected (Wolf, 1982).

The policy attempts during this time also reflected socialist ideals. The concentration of economic power and monopoly was reduced, small sector was promoted to generate income and livelihood for the common man, there were efforts to reduce regional disparities to promote regional development, and the prices of ‘essential’ products such as fertilisers, cement, pharmaceuticals, iron, and steel were reduced. The government also focussed highly on the provision of merit goods such as health and education. The government also funded higher education and research as well as other institutions of learning especially in science, technology, and management (Ray, 2015).

**2. Self-Reliance: 1970 – 1985:** 1960s was the decade of several changes in the development scenario for India because of the conflicts in two neighbouring countries China (1962) and Pakistan (1965). The limited military capabilities of India and vulnerabilities against global alliances increased the defence expenditures of the country. Due to this, the fight against poverty had to take a back seat. In 1966, USA withdrew its food aid to India thus increasing the economic vulnerability. The need for food self-sufficiency at this time prepared the country for Green Revolution. Shortly after this an acute currency crisis followed with devaluation of Indian rupee. After this, India strategically started to tilt more towards Russia. During this time, private capitalists emerged as a powerful class and for them the policies for self-reliance and import substitution was in perfect harmony with their self-interest of less competition.

During this time several legislative acts such as The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade practices Act (MRTP) (1970), Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) (1973), were passed to protect and develop regional, indigenous industrial and technological capabilities by restricting and regulating the operation of foreign multinational companies in India. During the

same year, the government nationalised 14 large commercial banks to spread banking into rural areas to cater the needs of green revolution that was going around at that time (Chakravarty, 1998).

In 1971, two landmark events brought poverty alleviation to centre-stage in India named The Bangladesh War and the victory of Indira Gandhi in general elections by promoting the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao'<sup>1</sup>. The government's focus towards self-sufficiency during this era also promoted the agricultural research and development. The green revolution was made possible because of the government's concerted investment and efforts. As an impact of green revolution, the agriculture employed during this time was around 68.3% of the workforce (Banerjee & Somanathan, 2007).

To conclude, this phase was eventful in terms of development, however the strain on the economy grew significantly during this time.

**3. Reforms: 1985 – 1990:** From mid 1980s, Rajiv Gandhi took over as a prime minister in India, there was a renewed emphasis on technological development. After the protectionist regime, the policymakers realised that the industries were becoming technologically backward and inefficient as compared with global standards of quality. This required opening to the world learning technological developments on the global frontier, by changing the inward-looking policy regime. (Ray, 2015)

This phase marked the beginning of India's liberalisation. Even though the policy responses in the mid-1980s were weak and sporadic, as they were only limited to liberalising selective aspects, without any major policy changes, but the attempts still showed changes and reforms that mark the start of Indian liberalisation era. (Lal, 1989).

**4. 1991 onwards:** In 1991, India faced a severe balance of payment crisis. During this time, the country launched economic reform packages with short-term stabilisation measures. The reforms initiated during this time resulted in complete paradigm shift in policymaking. The policies became more liberalised of government control, the private sector was emphasised more for growth, the markets were operated freely, and most importantly the integration with world economy was better. The Investment Commission, National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council were established to shift the government's role in industrial sector from 'control' to 'regulate' (Joshi & Little, 1994)

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<sup>1</sup> 'The English translation for 'Garibi Hatao' is Remove Poverty'.

In 1995, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) was set up to regulate stock market, stock exchange etc and in 1999, The Insurance Regulatory and Development Act (IRDA) was introduced, that started private participation in insurance sector. In agricultural sector, various inefficiencies were removed, some reform measures were introduced in areas such as subsidies and public distribution system. (Ray, 2015).

**2.2 Description of Study Location:** My study was conducted at a village called Kaluwala in Uttarakhand, which is one of the 28 states of India.<sup>2</sup> Data collection took place between January 2023 and February 2023. I chose Kaluwala as the study location, as this village was participating actively in the community services and self-help groups, which was a crucial aspect for my research. India is a vast country, with different languages being spoken in different states and with different dialects even within one state. Therefore, language was an important consideration in choosing the study location and Kaluwala which is a village close to my hometown, was ideal in this respect, as I could speak the local dialect.

The village Kaluwala comes in block Doiwala, in Dehradun District and falls under Doiwala assembly constituency<sup>3</sup>. The Lok Sabha Constituency of this village is 'Haridwar Parliamentary Constituency'<sup>4</sup>. The geographical area of Kaluwala village is 137.22 hectares. The population according to Census 2011 is 976. The number of males is 486 and the number of females is 490. The literacy rate of this village is 88.86%<sup>5</sup> There was one Primary government school in the village, which is now closed. Nearest primary health care centre, and other health services for this village are located more than 10 kms away. The local languages spoken are Hindi and Garhwali. The village is administered by a Gram panchayat<sup>6</sup>, which is elected every five years. I stayed in this village for a week before starting my fieldwork to observe the surroundings and meet people. Before starting the semi-structured interviews, I informed them about my study interest, research objectives and my interest in knowing about the development of the village and took their verbal consent.

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<sup>2</sup> Cited from Indian Government site <https://knowindia.india.gov.in/states-uts/>

<sup>3</sup> Doiwala Assembly Constituency is one of the legislative bodies in state legislative assembly.

<sup>4</sup> Haridwar Parliamentary Constituency is one of the Parliamentary constituencies that contains 2 to 3 state legislative assemblies.

<sup>5</sup> The data cited for the village Kaluwala is collected from the Indian Government Census Site: <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/45326-kaluwala-uttarakhand.html#>

<sup>6</sup> Gram Panchayat is the group of five directly elected representatives of a village in India.

In this section, I build on the background of Indian development history and trajectory with a description of the study location of my project. In the next section, I will describe the methods used in my research.

### **3. Methodology:**

Methodology is the assumptions, positions, and the philosophical stance that define the way a researcher chose his/her scientific investigation. Methods are considered as the tools used by the researcher based on his/her views, assumptions, and his position on the subject (Slevitch, 2011).

In this section, I will describe different methods and approaches used in my research, the challenges that I experienced during fieldwork, their effect on my findings, and the ethical considerations in my thesis. I will start with the reason I chose a qualitative research approach, followed by preparatory phase, data collection and analysis at the end.

**3.1 Qualitative Research Strategy:** Research fills a vital and crucial role in society. It is how ideas are studied, events are controlled or predicted, and theories are developed or refined. According to Janice M. Morse & Peggy Anne Field:

Qualitative research enables us to make sense of reality, to describe and explain the social world and to develop explanatory models and theories. It is the primary means by which the theoretical foundations of social sciences may be constructed or re-examined (Morse & Field, 1996, p.1).

Qualitative research in social sciences provides a variety of methods and approach. It emphasises on seeing the world through the eyes of people that we are studying by including the thick description of events and contexts. (Bryman, 2008). Qualitative research also provides an opportunity to be able to link the research question to the ground reality of the area that we are studying. It provides flexibility that helps in complex contexts of different places and villages where the discoveries will “do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretation” (Richard et al., 2007, p.30). It provides researcher the ability to make changes while in the field for better suitability. The information gathered in an interview is normally done in a natural setting, that also enable the interviewer to perceive more information through observations of behaviour (Silverman, 2001).

Another important reason why I chose qualitative research was to put focus on the point of views of the interviewees, that allowed me to understand all the dimensions of development and how the interviewee is perceiving it.

For my research, qualitative study was more useful as I wanted to study the role of common-people at village level in development of a country which gave me a direct insight into what are aam-aadmi's (common-man's) aspirations towards development. I wanted to highlight people's choices, their aspirations, their opinions and the answer to these questions cannot be quantified if they are not standardised, and with standardised information, there is a high chance of losing valuable information. As qualitative studies aim to focus on the deeper understanding of a topic, my purpose with this research is to get a good understanding of development scenario in India and how people at the village level are perceiving the development plans.

A qualitative study focusses on the fieldwork to capture crucial data and information. It includes information that can be extremely useful while interpreting and analysing the collected data. (Silverman, 2001). My aim was to establish an understanding of people's reasoning and their way of thinking, by being involved in their day to day lives, and observing the world through their eyes.

### **3.2 Planning for data collection:**

**3.2.1 Planning:** This research is a part of my master's degree. I am an international student in Norway, and being a citizen of India, I visualised myself doing some part of my research within development sector in India. In qualitative research, it is imperative for a researcher to start with a broad topic, and with some general question. (Bryman, 2008) My interest in the society and with my educational background in Economics, I was inclined to choose a topic that represented all these factors. My advisor also helped me a great deal in zooming in on the topic and suggested some works of scientists and academicians so I could decide what interests me the most. We then decided to research about the current situation of development in India, with a focus on 'Swaraj'<sup>7</sup> following the case study approach to further research about what is happening on the ground. The case study approach is used within social sciences, and it draws on an intensive examination of specific settings such as life, family, an organisation, a village, or a community. (Bryman, 2008). For my case study, I selected a village named Kaluwala, in

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<sup>7</sup> An alternate development approach.

district Dehradun, from state Uttarakhand, in India, after seeking a wide range of information such as community works, language spoken, geographical location, population etc. and started with the preparation for my fieldwork.

In my case study I planned to focus on the elements that can contribute to learning about the village community's experiences. For that, I planned to observe closely at the daily life and struggles of people living in that village, the current development situation, people's aspirations towards development. The main objective of case study was to illustrate and identify alternative representations and development practices in a concrete local setting.

**3.2.2 Reaching the Study Location:** I am an Indian citizen and for me there was no approval required to conduct research in India. I travelled to India on 28<sup>th</sup> of December to get started with my fieldwork. I did not start the research interviews right away as I wanted to study more about the research location. Kaluwala is a location that I knew only through few contacts, so it was important for me to visit the village and understand the daily life and experience different sides of the village from a tourist point of view. I stayed in Kaluwala for a week before starting my interviews and that gave me a lot of insights about development issues in the village. Common people such as farmers, women, local villagers gave me crucial information regarding the ground situation while powerful individuals such as people working in panchayat<sup>8</sup>, ex panchayat members, while some local politicians and authorities helped me in granting access to understand the procedure and implementation of development programmes in the village.

**3.3 Data Collection:** There are several methods that are used in qualitative research such as Participant observation, discourse, and conversation analysis, focus groups, interviews and analysis of texts and documents. (Bryman, 2008). Many researchers also combine the approaches to supplement the information collected during data collection (Baily, 2007). In my thesis, I have combined observation and interviews as main methods to collect and analyse data. The material for my thesis is however mainly based on information that is gathered through semi-structured interviews.

**3.3.1 Selecting Participants:** The semi-structured interviews were divided in three groups: The first group of informants were Gram Panchayat<sup>9</sup> workers, ex-panchayat workers, and local politicians. The second round of informants were common villagers including farmers, teachers, daily wage workers etc., and the third group of informants were women from the

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<sup>8</sup> Gram Panchayat is the local self-government organisation in India that functions at village level.

<sup>9</sup> Gram Panchayat is the local self-government organisation in India that functions at village level.

village. Some questions were similar, while some were made specifically according to these groups. In addition to this, I also had some unstructured conversations with people from the village. The interviewees were selected by me purposively with the help of an external informant. I selected people from different social and socio-economic backgrounds to make the sample representative. There were participants from different occupations such as farmers, teachers, self-help group help workers, etc. to keep the responses from every section of the village society. My sampling can therefore be called 'Purposive Sampling'. According to Bryman, "The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed" (Bryman 2012, p. 418).

The first group of informants were local politicians and Gram panchayat workers. The objective of my interview with local politicians and panchayat members was to get the information about how the schemes are conceived, schemes that are currently implemented, information regarding funds, schools, hospitals, women empowerment, self-help groups, audits, people's participation in these schemes, self-sufficiency etc. The main motive was to see the implementation and execution sides of the development. I used semi-structured interviews and observation as these methods aided the purpose of the research best, to learn from the interviewees, which were in this case, local politicians and gram panchayat workers, to see how they experience and envision development, the meanings they place on it, and most importantly about 'Swaraj' and if there are ways for the villagers to be self-sufficient. I also wanted to compare the differences in the experiences of those who are making/executing the plans and of those for whom these plans are made.

The second set of interviewees were local villagers, teachers, army persons and common people. The purpose of recruiting this section was to observe the ground level development in the village. Understanding their point of view, their aspirations, their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with plans that are implemented on top level, information on the reality of welfare-schemes, self-help groups, 'Swaraj' and if they feel developed or empowered. Be it teachers, farmers, government workers, army persons, or daily-wage workers, every section has a different view regarding development. So, it was important to listen to everyone for the study samples to be inclusive and relevant.

The third set of interviewees were women. It is not possible for a society to grow or develop without empowering women and this was one of my main objectives to focus on the aspirations



of women in Kaluwala. I picked interviewees from every section. Women with agricultural family and background, women working with self-help groups, and women from disadvantaged socio-economic background. The information collected was regarding their aspirations, the schemes that they are a part of, their education, jobs, finances, education for their children, healthcare for them, freedom, the role they have in their houses, their role in society etc. I informed them that I am doing this for my study project and asked them if they are comfortable with me asking such questions. I mentioned that their answers will be kept private, and they can choose to not answer any question, if they want.

The purpose of study was explained, and the consent was duly taken before starting all the conversations.

**3.3.2 Interviews:** The method that I chose for my data collection was semi-structured interviews. Semi structured interviews are effective for data collection when researcher wants to collect open-ended data. These interviews are a good way to collect data as they provide the option of exploring and observing the participant reaction, thought and beliefs about specific topics. This interview structure also makes sure that the researcher gets the answers to central questions of the research and could also include topics that emerge during the conversation. (Baily, 2007). I prepared an interview structure with different questions for different groups of interviewees and made sure to include all aspects of my research topic in it. During the interview, I added certain questions, to understand a topic better, and skipped some. I also changed the wordings and order of the questions, to make them easier to understand.

The interview with the politician from Kaluwala, was a part of ‘Interview questions for bureaucrats and officials’, however I had to change the questions to ‘Interview questions for common people’ as the interviewee did not have enough information regarding formal development procedure, like I expected.

I took notes during the interview, and I paid attention to the interviewee’s body language and their expression. Before starting the interviews, I informed the interviewees that I would not use/take any private data such as name, occupation, address etc to respect their privacy. I also informed that their answers would stay confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. All my interviews were transcribed by myself, and I have maintained great accuracy in translating and transcribing them.

As Baily mentions, the researcher should go to the interviewee’s setting instead of asking them to come to the place of researcher’s choice. It makes them talk more freely, and also makes it

easier for the researcher to observe the surrounding of the interviewee. In a naturalistic setting, the interview can feel like a normal conversation, rather than a formal question-answer situation (Baily, 2007).

**3.3.3 Unstructured conversations and observations:** Before starting my interviews, I stayed in the village Kaluwala for a week. During this time, my aim was to observe and have a conversation with the villagers, about their lifestyle, their surroundings, their social life in village. I visited the primary school, common hall where villagers organise weddings, panchayat house, temples, agricultural fields etc. The main purpose of the observation was to take in as much impressions as possible. Collecting data through these unstructured conversations and observations holds a significant importance for any research.

According to Bryman, observation as a part of a qualitative field study is crucial as it combines the observations that are focussed on the research questions with causal observations that are important to have the real picture of the field (Bryman, 2008). The additional information that we take during the field trip is considered very useful in interpreting the data (Bryman, 2008). During this time, I had conversation with random people such as farmers, labourers working in construction, women working in fields, fetching water from common areas etc. It prepared me for the interview in terms of what kind of questions to avoid, the questions that may be relevant, questions that could be included as trail questions and the overall skill of communicating. The field notes I took during these conversations and observations gave me reflections around the methods that I used and the findings. These conversations happened naturally at all the places I visited in India. This includes the city of Dehradun, a close by village named Midhawala, primary school of this village where I had long conversations with teachers and other places that I visited near this village.

**3.3.4 Translation:** The language used in my interviews was the local dialect of Hindi, as this was the common language of the village. I translated my interview questions to Hindi first, and while taking interviews, I used to write down the information given by the interviewees and transcribed them to English the very same day. While doing data analysis, I will use some of the interview phrases, sentences, words and for that I will use parenthesis along with a reference or a footnote mentioning that the phrase, sentence is from the interview and the translation is mine. While writing the thesis, it is crucial that the translation is done with great accuracy, and I have made sure that the information is accurate and no valuable information is lost.

**3.4 Analysis:** After collecting data from Kaluwala, I constantly thought about how my findings will answer my research questions and how the data collected will support my answers. To do that, I went through all the data, observations, and interviews. I made notes, grouped answers, and kept a track of similar patterns of answers, the contradictions, the findings. The analysing process also included discussions with my supervisor, discussing my findings, observations, and noting down their opinions about the data.

**3.5 Ethical Considerations:** Ethical considerations are an important part of research that should be done at all stages in the research. Research ethics are the principles that are used by the researchers to conduct research without harming the participants knowingly or unknowingly. Research ethics revolve around these four areas:

1. “Whether there is harm to participants.
2. Whether there is a lack of informed consent.
3. Whether there is an invasion of privacy.
4. Whether deception is involved.” (Bryman, 2016, p. 125).

In my research topic, I am using semi structured interviews and observations as data collection methods, and I have made sure that my methods keep in mind all the ethical considerations required for the research.

The first and foremost ethical concern was “whether there is a harm to participants”. For interview and observation, I informed all the participants about the type of questions that I had included in the interviews. My topic was not sensitive, and all the participants were adults, who gave consent to being interviewed so there was no harm whatsoever to the participants.

The second ethical concern was “Lack of informed consent”. For that I made sure that I explain the objective of my research to all the participants and to get their consent before each interview. I also gave them the option of not answering the question, if they are not willing to answer and the option of leaving the interview anytime, they prefer.

To address “Invasion of privacy” I did not take any personal data such as name, occupation, or any identifiable data. I informed them that no one will know what they have answered except me, and their privacy will be respected in every way. In this way, I ensured there was no invasion of privacy for any participant of my research.

I have protected the identity of the interview participants as much as possible and at the same time I have given people from all the sections of the village a chance to be heard.

My research aims and objectives were stated clearly to the participants and there was no deception involved in before, during and after the data collection/interviews.

When I started thinking about my topic, I thought of taking interviews with children, students regarding their education, their satisfaction, the education quality etc. However, I decided to go against this approach, because it was challenging to take their interview as interviewing children involves more planning and approvals such as taking permissions from their guardian, teachers, and most of the children do not have concrete thoughts about development, policies etc. Keeping this ethical consideration in mind, I decided to not interview children, students from the village.

I believe I have dealt with ethical issues to a large extent in my research and I maintained balance between obtaining accurate responses and conducting ethical interviews with informed consent and without any invasion of privacy.

To the best of my abilities, I respected the traditions, values, opinions of the researched community to make the interviewees feel comfortable enough with my presence. I made sure to spend time with the interviewees outside the interview, so they feel more comfortable with me during the interview.

**3.6 Challenges:** It is not possible to write a research project without problems or challenges. In this section, I will examine the challenges of my research project.

**3.6.1 Difficulty in Translation:** In my project I had to be the translator myself and that was a big challenge and a limitation of the data collection. First, I had to translate all the interview questions in Hindi, which was the local language of village Kaluwala. It seemed easy when I started thinking about it, however, it was not because I had to make sure that the meaning of every question remains the same after translation. Hindi vocabulary was another limitation for me, as it has been around 14 years since I studied/worked in Hindi. For that, I had to take external help so the words that I used in the interviews are understandable and accurate version of what I needed. After interviews, I again had to transcribe all Hindi interviews in English without losing any information and including every minor detail mentioned during the interview. For that, I transcribed every interview withing 2 hours of time, so I do not lose any memory of the interview.

**3.6.2 Interview setting:** The interview setting is the surroundings, location, and the language of the interview. The interview setting depends a lot on the interview process and how the interview was arranged. An interview setting greatly influences the data collected and the information recorded. According to Baily, “Where an interview is held can affect its quality” (Baily 2007, p. 104). Here, I will mention the challenges that I faced in some interviews due to the interview setting.

The interview that I did with the ex-Gram panchayat member was done in the garden in front of the interviewee’s house. There were so many wild monkeys around the garden, creating havoc that it was tough to ask questions and get answers without distractions. That affected the quality of the interview as we had to wind up quickly and because of that we might have missed out on some crucial information.

The interview done with the member of Gram Panchayat was also a difficult one to take, as the mobile phone of the interviewee kept ringing so frequently that distracted both me and the interviewee many times during the interview. We had to pause the interview three times in between so the interviewee could take the calls. This affected the quality of interview greatly and I think we might have missed on a lot of the information because of that.

In one of the interviews, we chose to sit in the veranda<sup>10</sup> while taking the interview as it was convenient for the interviewee. This location was not convenient for me because there was so much wind and other background noises that it was hard for me to hear the interviewee. This impacted my note taking and later I discovered that the notes were not up to the mark and because of this reason, I had to discard this interview.

Because of these challenges, I made sure that the interview location was good, so I could take important information and make notes without any distractions.

**3.6.3 Objectivity:** Objectivity in research means reducing or eliminating bias in the research. This shows that the findings are not influenced by the researcher’s opinions, their behaviour, or their personality (Baily, 2007). The research should strive for objectivity and produce generalizable results that can be replicated by other scholars, at different times. (Bryman, 2012). As the researcher of this project, I must acknowledge that I am an Indian citizen, who share a lot of commonalities with the participants of this research. The subjective understanding and the world view that I have, can be negative for the objectivity of this research, regardless

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<sup>10</sup> An open gallery attached to the house.

of my neutrality on the topic. However, I have supported all my findings with data which reduces the bias to a high extent. As Baily mentions, “Recognizing the subjective nature of field research, they replace objectivity and value-neutrality with confirmability, which requires that findings be supported by data” (Baily, 2007, p. 184). I have tried my best to present the opinions of people without letting my own opinions affect the data and findings. This research would have never been possible without being considerate of Villager’s values, opinions, and experiences.

These challenges provided an excellent opportunity for me to reflect upon the decisions I made in my research, and I took every effort to effectively address these specific challenges that arose during data collection.

In the next section, I will present the literature review of current situation of Indian development and alternative development approaches and theories suggested by researchers and scholars. We will also discuss summary of different development policies, schemes, top-down, bottom-up approaches, local and regional policies, participation of people, and swaraj.

**4. Literature Review:** Development policies were introduced in India after 1947, the year India got independence from the British Empire. The notion of further production as the basis for progress was emerging. The task that had to be done to introduce progress were capital formation, technological innovation, industrialization, monetary and fiscal policies, agricultural development, and trade. During this time international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), different technical and developmental agencies emerged. There were many areas that were advocated to enhance progress and development such as: 1. Capital Accumulation, 2. Development planning 3. Industrialisation 4. External Aid. As I have mentioned in background section, India tried to follow the path created by developed economies and these developmental agencies.

There is no doubt about the fact that after decades of ‘development’, India, as well as the world is still in crisis and this crisis exists across all continents. The development policies have failed to show the capacity for providing economic and social guarantees to people, especially to poor and marginalized section of society (Esteva & Prakash, 1998).

**4.1 Theoretical Background:** According to many scholars such as Ashish Kothari, Arturo Escobar and others, development was supposed to close the gap between the rich and the poor, but it has done the exact opposite. The objective of fighting poverty has been successful in

some places, even though it is at the cost of even larger inequalities and irreparable environmental damage (Rekhviashvili, 2023). The global warming levels and biodiversity erosion have also dwindled the faith on the social evolution of developed nations. The progress of developed nations is being called regressive as the capitalist values of global North are exploiting nature immensely which is leading to unsustainability for not only humans, but also for animals, and biodiversity in general. (Demaria & Kothari, 2017).

According to these scholars, 'Development' has always been a statistical concept, where it is impossible to rank the nations of the world without Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Under this conception, development is thus often equated with incomes. The institutions such as International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World trade organisation believe in the idea of development as growth while United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme and many NGOs emphasized on the idea of development as social policy, where instead of the GDP numbers, the social indicators such as nutrition, education, health, and environment are considered necessary to map a country's development performance. Some development scholars believe GDP to be a deficit index to measure development as it classifies the countries hierarchically and still promotes the dictatorship of quantitative comparison. The confusion where people are alienated from their traditions, aware of western living through use of internet and mobile phones, and yet excluded from the real world. It creates cultural confusion and ecological crisis that hampers the development in the world (Rekhviashvili, 2023).

**4.1.1 Post-Development Dictionary:** The 'post-Development dictionary' focuses on the agenda for research and action for scholars, policymakers, and activists. The thought of post development started out with the idea of total rejection of mainstream development, with the realisation that attaining a middle-class lifestyle is not possible for most of the world population. According to Nandy, 1998, these mainstream practices were rejected because they were supposedly the 'new religion of the West'. (Nandy, 1988). Escobar mentioned that these development models are external and are based on the industrialized model. Instead, people need more endogenous discourses that focus on culture, local knowledge, promotion of localized, pluralised grassroot movements. (Escobar, 1992). Many researchers such as Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, Alberto Acosta believe that development thinking should investigate the What, How, Why, and for Whom the development should be done (Kothari et al., 2019).

According to these researchers:

Global North and South are not geographic designations but have economic and geopolitical implications. ‘Global North’ therefore may describe both historically dominant nations as well as colonized but wealthy ruling elites in the South. Similarly, for new alter-globalization alliances, ‘South’ can be a metaphor for exploited ethnic minorities or women in affluent countries, as much as historically colonized or ‘poorer’ countries as a whole. (Rekhviashvili, 2023, p. 21).

When the notion of development spread around the world, only a few countries were called ‘Developed’, while other countries emulate the North’s development template, at a high ecological and social cost. Implementation of developmental policies was not the only problem, but the real problem was the conception of development as a material and financial growth driven by commodification and capitalism. According to Escobar et al., the main problem is the conception of ‘modernity’. Here, modernity means the dominant world view that emerged in Europe, where the premise that ‘God’ made the Earth for the benefit of humans’ holds true. This view is called anthropocentrism (Rekhviashvili, 2023). This ideology legitimized the devastation of nature and exploited the natural resources, till they started depleting. Here, comes the need to move from current globalizing development models to non-modern and self-defined alternatives that are associated with indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity. It is important to give voice to the diversities for cultural awakening and creating knowledge both within and between societies across the world. The Western development model is inequitable and is leading to ecological collapse, increase in inequality, poverty, hunger, and discrimination (Kothari et al., 2019).

**4.1.2 Pluriverse:** According to Karl Marx, when a new society is born from inside the old, it carries many defects of the old system with it. This Marxist analysis is necessary but is not sufficient and this perspective needs to be complemented with perspectives emanating from the Global South.

As Escobar et al. says:

Pluriverse’ - a world where many worlds fit, as the Zapatistas of Chiapas put it. All people’s worlds should co-exist with dignity and peace without being subjected to diminishment, exploitation, and misery. (Kothari et al., 2019, p. 28).



Pluriverse is a world where people leave behind the anthropocentric notions of development by re-learning to be a humble part of 'nature'. Here, there is no administration either by any global governance regime or any state or regional regime. It is a world confluence of alternative development that includes small everyday actions, thus contributing to the greater good of nature and human beings. Some visions and practices of Pluriverse are well known with different names throughout South America such as *buen vivir*, 'a culture of life', *ubuntu* from South Africa, *Swaraj* from India that focusses on self-reliance and self-governance and many more as such. These visions and practices have long history and they co-exist comfortably with concepts such as degrowth (Kothari et al., 2019).

**4.1.3 Degrowth:** The term 'degrowth' was initially proposed by a political ecologist named Andre Gorz in 1972. Eventually, it met a need felt by political ecologists and development critics to remind people of the meaning of limits.

Degrowth challenges the hegemony of growth and calls for a democratically led redistributive downscaling of production and consumption in industrialized countries as a means to achieve environmental sustainability, social justice and well-being (Demaria & Kothari, 2017, p. 7).

In a degrowth society the focus is not on economic growth, but on creating a society that escapes from the existing economy as a material reality and imperialist discourse. In this society, the primary significations are 'sharing', 'simplicity', 'conviviality', 'care', and the 'commons' (D'Alisa et al., 2015).

"Degrowth implies an equitable redistribution of wealth within and across the global North and South, as well as between present and future generations" (Rekhviashvili, 2023, p.149). The fact that 'Degrowth' focusses on formulating strategies such as oppositional activism, grassroots alternatives to development, and institutional policies to draw power from principles of environmental justice makes it interesting. According to Escobar et al., it is not just an alternative, but a matrix of alternatives that throw off economic totalitarianism by reopening the human adventure to a plurality of creativities. This design of 'Degrowth' takes the form of 'virtuous circle' of sobriety by focussing on 8 'R's that are: re-evaluate, reconceptualize, restructure, relocate, redistribute, reduce, reuse, and recycle (Latouche, 2009).

**4.1.4 Buen Vivir:** Buen Vivir has emerged as a proposal for going beyond western definitions and practices of wellbeing (Gudynas, 2011). This concept is generated from different countries and different actors; thus, it cannot be reduced to one specific context. It encompasses a critique

to conventional notions of development such as capitalism and deconstructs these notions. It also proposes alternate practices of development that challenge dominant ways of conceiving wellbeing and questions the way development is generally understood. According to Gudynas, Good Living encompasses a set of ideas coming forward as both a reaction and an alternative to conventional notions of development. (Gudynas, 2011).

According to the view of Buen Vivir (Good Living), the conventional notions of development are deeply entrenched in the idea of modern industrial societies and an epistemic tradition that embraces a specific knowledge system. This knowledge system has few assumptions such as a linear approach to history, nature is conceived as an object for human use instead for being conceived as a living subject and a part of society, and the idea that says achieving wellbeing is only possible with economic growth. However, Buen Vivir provides other ways of perceiving the relationship between society, nature and wellbeing which was summarised by Gudynas as:

A central aspect in the formulation of Good Living takes place in the formulation of a critique of contemporary development. For example, it questions the rationale of contemporary development, its emphasis on economic aspects and the market, its obsession with consumption, or the myth of continued progress (Gudynas, 2011, p. 2)

**4.1.5 Direct Democracy:** Direct democracy is a form of self-rule where citizens participate directly without mediation in the tasks of government. It focusses on the dispersal of power, eliminates the distinction between rulers and the people that are governed, and favours decentralisation. In this type of democracy, the principle of political equality is considered crucial as that all voices in the society are equally audible. One of the key institutions is the deliberative assembly meeting where citizens make decision by understanding, listening, and discussing different views on a matter, reflecting on each view, and arriving at a common decision without coercion. This way, the development needs of everyone from the society is valued and citizens decide what is good for the wellbeing and development of their area. In terms of post development, the potential of direct democracy can be seen in two ways: “On the one hand, it helps challenge the hegemony of single ways of thinking and the colonization of minds a heteronomous imaginary<sup>11</sup>; on the other hand, it helps to build the alternatives to development in the practice” (Kothari et al., 2019, p. 155).

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<sup>11</sup> Heteronomous imaginary is a concept of giving someone a different way of thinking. (About growth, in this context)

According to Ashish Kothari (2014), the framework of decentralisation and local democracy put communities at the centre of governance and the economy. He presents some examples such as, in central India, there is an indigenous community in a village named Mendha-Lekha. This community is the government in their village. Here, the village Gram Sabha<sup>12</sup> meets and make key decisions by consensus. They insist that all the decisions regarding the use of resources, use of land within the territorial jurisdiction of that village will only take place if the Gram Sabha gives consent. They have subsidiary bodies like abhyas gats<sup>13</sup> (Study Circles) which means study circles that provide the necessary information before coming to a decision. If any urgent matter arises, any person can call Gram Sabha. Such examples of direct democracy focus on the participation of everyone. In this kind of democracies, the state will have a legitimate role with the main function of generating financial resources for public service, enforcing environmental regulations, and providing personal and collective security to the villages. (Kothari, 2014).

Another example of this is the democratic decentralisation in Karnataka state in the 1980s that resulted in improvement of education and health sector. In West Bengal, the systematic political activism was successful in implementing land reforms and poverty alleviation programmes. One more substantial example of local democracy is the experience of Nagaland state in India where Village development boards has achieved several positive achievements regarding health, education, and power to village and communities (Drèze et al., 1997).

Across India, several communities are exploring new sustainable and equitable ways of achieving development and well-being. These initiatives are a mix of creating new ways and challenging existing systems to synchronize old and new knowledge. This vision is called Radical Ecological Democracy (RED) or eco-swaraj.

**4.1.6 Radical Ecological Democracy (RED) or Eco-Swaraj:** According to Dahmen & Degenhardt, Eco-swaraj is, “a socio-cultural, political, and economic arrangement in which all people and communities have the right and full opportunity to participate in decision-making, based on the twin fulcrums of ecological sustainability and human equity” (Dahmen & Degenhardt, 2018, p. 77).

This is an evolving governance framework where every person and communities have the access to take decisions on the matters that concern them. This paradigm has emerged from

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<sup>12</sup> Gram Sabha is the general body of village council in Indian villages.

<sup>13</sup> Study Circles.

many grassroots initiatives, such as 'swaraj', which has its roots in Gandhian thought and practice. There are five principles that RED emphasises: Ecological Sustainability, Direct political democracy, economic democracy, social justice, and cultural diversity. In this democracy, decision making starts from the smallest, most basic unit.

There is an example of direct democracy in India in the form of initiatives such as ecological democracy. An example is the Arvari Parliament of 72 riverine villages in the state of Rajasthan, where people are trying to achieve bioregional ecological units, which are governed democratically by local communities. Here, safeguarding community interests, cultural diversity, indigenous knowledge, human well-being, conservation of scarce resources and ecological resilience is pledged (Hasnat, 2005).

**4.1.7 Swaraj and village development in India:** The word 'Swaraj' means self-rule and self-restraint. Swaraj is obtained by empowering every person to a sense where they have the capacity to resist authority by a few people and when it is abused. It means 'Swaraj' can be obtained by empowering the masses, so they have the capacity to regulate and control the authority. According to Mahatma Gandhi, 'Swaraj' plays a crucial role in development of a village or of individuals. From his vision, an ideal village or village swaraj is a complete republic, which is independent of its neighbours for its wants and needs (Garg et al., 2015).

According to Gandhian concept of village development, an ideal village should be constructed in such a way that it lends itself to perfection. By perfection, he meant sanitation, cottages with sufficient lights, with the ventilation build with a material that can be obtained within the radius of five miles. There should be space for the people to plant vegetation for domestic use and to house their cattle, the village streets should be free of dust. Water resources such as wells and ponds are accessible for everyone. There should be a co-operative dairy, a place for selling khadi<sup>14</sup> which means producing and selling their own vegetables, lentils, grains, fruits etc. There should be one primary and one secondary school where providing industrial education should be the focus. The panchayat (A body of five elected representatives from local population who form local government at village level in India) should be there in a village to settle the disputes. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the village resources were not for commercialisation, but for the local purposes that enables common people to earn income and increase the village income. People in the villages should never live like animals, but like

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<sup>14</sup> Khadi is a hand-spun and woven natural fibre cloth that was promoted by Mahatma Gandhi during freedom struggle of India.

intelligent human beings. It was very clear that concentration of economic or political power would reduce the principles and ethics of participatory democracy. Like Ashish Kothari, Amartya Sen, and other alternate development scholars, he was an avid promoter of decentralisation of power. ‘Swaraj’ in villages would mean inclusiveness and the ideas of Gram swaraj<sup>15</sup> and Panchayati Raj<sup>16</sup> should go hand in hand to promote the much needed social and political change. As cited in Garg et al., 2015, Mahatma Gandhi mentioned, “Panchayat Raj represents true democracy realized. We would regard the humblest and the lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land.” (Gandhi, n.d, as cited in Garg et al., 2015). They mentioned how Mahatma Gandhi also explained measures such as sanitation, physical infrastructure, environment, health, education etc. in details while explaining swaraj. Following the same trail of thought, the current Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi has announced a sustainable approach to empower Indian villages, in October 2014, which is called “Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana”<sup>17</sup> where he urged the Member of Parliament (MPs)<sup>18</sup> to adopt one village of their choice and include all the interventions of development in that village. The scheme, however, is failing because of funding, administrative and perceptive woes (Garg & Rawat, 2015).

The above section answers one of my sub research questions, “What does theory say about the impact of bottom-up development and local level participation in both decision-making and execution in alternate development outcomes?” These theories given by development experts promote relationship between culture and nature, autonomy and self-reliance, solidarity and reciprocity, commons and collective ethics, inclusiveness and dignity, justice, and equity, etc. to promote development. Even though the indigenous organizations differ from country to country, a common perception of these organizations is to defeat and challenge the economic and cultural structures of domination by articulating broad political demands and decentralizing governing structures. These alternative practices present alternative development that includes critical sensibilities and redefining the goals of development. Here, development is no longer simply viewed as GDP or income growth, but as human development, which criticises mainstream development and is concerned with bottom-up policies and local participation, with alternative practices on the ground.

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<sup>15</sup> Gram Swaraj means village self-rule.

<sup>16</sup> Panchayati raj is the system of local self-government of villages in India.

<sup>17</sup> A rural development programme.

<sup>18</sup> Member of House of Representatives in India.

If we study the practicality of these unconventional development practices in India, there are some villages/regions that are setting good examples in following these approaches. However, to observe the result of these plans, it is also important to study the current condition of rural development, and how Indian government's development policies are structured and executed.

**4.2 Rural development in India:** The quest for achievement of development is a critical concern for most developing countries including India. According to Ollawa (1971), as cited in Nwagboso & Duke (2012), rural development is “the restructuring of the economy in order to satisfy the material needs and aspirations of the rural masses and to promote individual and collective incentives to enable them participate in the process of development” (Ollawa, 1971, as cited in Nwagboso & Duke, 2012, p.28).

In India, and several other development countries, the rural population often do not benefit from most of the policies. To emphasise the need for greater attention towards rural areas, where majority of population lives, the rural-urban drift needs to be reduced. In India, there is a large divide in the rural and urban employment, housing problems, food scarcity, health challenges and especially the knowledge of people regarding available schemes to take benefit of. To address the issue of slowness of development in rural areas, several countries adopt and implement certain policies to tackle problems such as poverty, illiteracy, hunger, employment, inequality etc. In India, the rural development strategies are based on several schemes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Rural housing schemes, Employment assurance scheme, Food for work programme, social security program, etc. These schemes come under ‘National Rural Employment Act of 2005’ (Nwagboso & Duke, 2012).

However, without diagnosing the structural roots of poverty, inequality, unsustainability, the concepts such as ‘accelerated growth’, ‘inclusive growth’ cannot be expected in Indian villages. According to Ashish Kothari, for inclusive growth, only focussing on modern science and technology is not enough. It also needs focussing on indigenous, regional, traditional, and community-based knowledge which is largely ignored in India. There should be an adequate focus in direct democracy and the power in politics should flow upwards from the ground instead of flowing from top to ground (Kothari et al., 2014).

**4.3 The current development approach in India:** India is a constitutional federation with powers of legislation divided among central and state government. Even though the state government holds a big share in administration and legislature, there is a major gap in the literature in the key areas of land, labour, and agricultural markets. In this section, I present

different development policies that are currently running in India and top-down vs. bottom-up approaches.

There are several policies that are run by the Government of India, to target the issue of unemployment, to promote education, health access, women empowerment etc. Some examples are MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) which provides a job card to the youth, Right to Education, National Urban Health Mission, National Rural Health Mission, National food security Act, Public Distribution System, to name a few (Esteves et al., 2013).

However, the most important aspect for the success of a policy or a scheme is the implementation of that policy/scheme. Now, we will have a look at how these programmes/schemes are implemented in the states, districts, villages in India. Here, emphasis is given to the actors that are involved, the bottom-up and top-down approaches, the execution and implementation of these programmes.

**Overall Implementation in The Country:** The planning process in India has been centralized for a long-time. The plan formulation is carried out by the Centre and the state governments. However, after 1992, the lower level of planning (State, local, and Municipal authorities) is also given more powers in the formulation and implementation of plans. Following are the different levels of planning and their roles in the implementation of development plans.

**4.3.1 National-Level Planning:** The general objective of national planning in India includes the analysis of country's objectives and priorities in relation to production of goods, supply of services, tourism, education, health sector etc. It requires a multi-level planning approach that involves all hierarchies of administrative, political, geographical, and regional level planning. This approach seeks to involve active participation in information generation, data collection, policy suggestion, plan implementation, monitoring of development plans etc.

In India, there is a nodal agency called Planning Commission, that was operationalised in March 1950. The Prime Minister is the chairman of this commission. This agency prepares plans for the country, coordinates the sectoral development work of different ministries at different levels. The constitutional status has been granted to the planning commission through 52<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution. (Chatterjee, 2000). It undertakes evaluation studies to assess the impacts of different plans and schemes to provide feedback to planners and implementing agencies. The commission formulates the following plans:

- a. Five-year plans (FYPs)
- b. Annual plans that come within the framework of Five-Year Plans
- c. Perspective plans for 15-25 years (Chand et al., 1983).

There is another council named National development Council which is the highest policy making body that provides the opportunity of unified development effort for plans and schemes to be formulated and implemented uniformly. The participation of regional communities in formation of these plans is close to none.

**4.3.2 State-Level Planning:** The role of states in implementation of development policies is extremely crucial. The role of state includes everything from implementing plans that are made at the union level, to providing resources for the implementation of these plans, coordinating development plans of different ministries and districts, engaging local people by providing them relevant information etc (George et al., 2019). If we take example of Indian states, there are several states where the government and authorities have done an exceptional job at implementing development programs sponsored by the central government, by taking important initiatives. Some examples are healthcare sector in Kerala, employment guarantee schemes in Maharashtra, social security in Tamil Nadu, drought relief in Gujarat, Panchayati raj in Karnataka, primary education in Himanchal Pradesh and land reforms in West Bengal (Drèze & Sen, 1997). Even though these initiatives were not entirely successful, there was high responsiveness rate by state policy that catered social needs and developmental concerns. However, there are also some states where the state government was not able to produce satisfactory results. For example, in some states, schools are opened by the state government, but they are without teachers, there are not enough health facilities, dysfunctional poverty alleviation programs etc. If we talk about agricultural sector, several farmers are committing suicides as they have immense pressure created by banks for small credit loans that these farmers take for agricultural purposes. This is an important reason the issue of local democracy and village politics is highly crucial (Drèze & Sen, 1997).

The commonalities of the alternative development approaches stress on local community involvement and bottom-up approach to development. Since a bottom-up focus is very important to these alternative development models and theories, it is essential to understand the terms Bottom-up and top-down growth before moving ahead with this thesis.



**4.3.3 Bottom-up approach:** Bottom-up approach is a local concentration approach of a collective development process whereby a local community is allowed to take charge of the development of that area. It allows the local players and local communities to express their views and ideas to help in defining the development course for their area with their views, expectations, and plans. At every stage of development, the most crucial element is to consider the appropriate tools and methods that will foster local participation. This approach is aimed at the whole community, social and economic interest groups, representative public, and private institutions. Other objectives of bottom-up approach are to generate initiatives, to delegate decision-making powers, to build consensus, to implement plans that are tailor made for a particular area. (Isidiho et al., 2016).

If I present the case of India, less attention has been given to the normative bottom-up plans in the development sector. Here, most of the large-scale development projects are implemented by central government, however, the development literature provides insight that the community and ground level groups are best suited to suggest and implement development projects because they can match the needs of local communities with better implementation (Joshi & Rao, 2018). The bottom-up development approaches look at the development from local and grassroots point of view and there are many example villages and communities in India, where bottom-up approaches have been proved to be successful. An example of bottom-up approach is ‘People’s Plan Process’ in Kerala State in India, which created the opportunity for the villagers to carry out their own development plans, with the help pf state-government. In another state named Tamil Nadu, many producers, consumers, and investors have formed a cooperative, named ‘Just Change’, to localize exchanges, which is benefiting several families<sup>19</sup> (Dahmen & Degenhardt, 2018).

**4.3.4 Top-Down Approach:** Top-down approach is a term given to the development strategies where top-level authorities make plans for the lower-level people and citizens. It is a traditional approach to make plans for the citizen of a country where the process starts with higher authorities and then moves downward. In this approach, information and plans are filtered down through different levels. This model is followed more in developing countries including India, where upper management delivers policies and tasks to the lower management to execute. In this approach, communication is often one-way from the government or the higher

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<sup>19</sup> [www.justchangeindia.com](http://www.justchangeindia.com)

authorities down to the local people. This approach does not take the aspirations of local people and communities in picture (Jagtap et al., 2018).

Many scholars such as Amartya Sen, Ashish Kothari, Arturo Escobar, and others argue that the Top-Down development plans hold less relevance for small communities as they are not effective enough for their welfare. These scholars argue that bottom-up development keeps in mind the development needs of small communities, groups of people, villages, people belonging to certain social-background in mind, which is crucial for the development of a country (Kothari et al., 2017).

In the data analysis section, I will present the ground reality of these bottom-up and top-down approaches with the help of a case study in a village named Kaluwala in Uttarakhand state of India. Here, I will discuss the importance of people's aspirations, local-participation and how it affects the development of that village. This section has given an overview of the alternate development policies suggested by development scholars and the current development approach in India.

**5. Results and Discussion:** In the following section, I will analyse, present, and discuss the data collected during my fieldwork at Kaluwala village. The discussion in this section will focus on literature presented in the section 'Literature review', as well as my own findings. The analysis has been divided into different themes related to swaraj and development in general.

### **5.1 Different Conceptions of Development among Villagers in Kaluwala:**

One of my first questions after familiarization with the interviewee was "What is your idea of development?" This question is also a part of one of my research questions that is, 'How do locals envision development?' This question threw up a wide variety of answers, depending upon the gender and socioeconomic background of the respondent. For instance, one of the most interesting answers I received was from an ex-Gram Panchayat<sup>20</sup> worker was: "Development would mean getting rid of the monkeys who were creating havoc in the agricultural fields."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gram Panchayat is the basic governing institution in Indian villages. They are responsible for the overall development of the village as they play a vital role in providing basic services to villagers.

<sup>21</sup> Translated statement from my interview with ex gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

Most respondents stuck to the general and dominant conception of development such as a woman who was an ex-gram Panchayat worker saying, “Development entails many things such as solving problems etc. Some people do not have electricity, some do not have water, someone is sick, they come to us with their problems, and we solve them.”<sup>22</sup> Another respondent, a teacher said “Development is happening in our village. We have roads, we have water, we have electricity, our only problem is a hospital, which is far from our village. We have an ayurvedic hospital within 4 kms and another hospital at Doiwala.”<sup>23</sup>

We see that many of the villagers define development in terms of access to basic facilities such as water, electricity, roads, and health care services. The western concept of development predominates, including in the answer from the farmer who believed a clean environment free of stray wildlife signals development.

Interestingly, several people mentioned women’s issues and status in society as being part of development. For instance, a man who was a member of Gram Panchayat mentioned:

Everyone conceives development in a different way but if we are providing better services for Vikas<sup>24</sup> we can call it development. It includes electricity, water, roads, women empowerment etc. Some years ago, women never used to participate in panchayats, but now, from last 8 years, women are stepping out, kids are getting better at multitasking. This is what I call development.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, another woman said that “For us development is education, which is not available here.”<sup>26</sup> Another woman, who is a part of the women’s self-help group, emphatically equated development with the status of women, by saying:

Development is the growth of women. If women are progressing, the whole house will progress. Even if they are housewives, they should still do something to earn money. This will also help the family economically. This will also make the women feel empowered.<sup>27</sup>

From these answers, a few things stood out to me: First thing that was that most villagers define development in terms of access to basic facilities such as employment, education, water,

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<sup>22</sup> Translated statement from my interview with ex gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

<sup>23</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a teacher from the village in Kaluwala.

<sup>24</sup> The English translation of Vikas is growth.

<sup>25</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

<sup>26</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman from the village in Kaluwala.

<sup>27</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who was working with self-help groups.

electricity, and roads. They also showed a very western concept of development without anyone voicing concerns for preserving the ecology, environment, equality etc.

Second, in all my observations, patriarchy dominates in life in the villages. This can be observed from things such as the reply of ex gram panchayat member. When I asked her questions related to development in village, she replied, “My husband will be able to tell this.”<sup>28</sup> In India, some gram panchayat seats are reserved for women, to take advantage of this, many people elect their wives as namesake in these seats, while it is them who take advantage of the position.

When I asked the politician about women empowerment he laughed and replied, “All the women in our families are already empowered”.<sup>29</sup>

However, in many people’s answers it was clear that there is now at least a conception of women’s rights and a desire at least amongst some women that things should change.

According to these interviews, there is very little concern or awareness about the pitfalls of the western concept of development. It seems that the awareness of these pitfalls is more present in the western, developed world, while in the developing countries some of the poorest and most deprived sections just want to develop like the West without having to worry about things like nature, environment, sustainability, self-sufficiency etc.

**5.2 People’s conception of Swaraj and self-sufficiency:** India has always had a concept of political swaraj, which was an ideology promoted by the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. According to Gandhiji. “True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village.” (Gandhi, 1963, p.9). As mentioned in my literature review section, village swaraj was conceived by Gandhiji as decentralised democracy where everything begins at the bottom. In addition, in recent years economists such as ‘Ashish Kothari’ have given us an economic concept of swaraj, named ‘Eco-swaraj’ as explained above in my literature review section.

My interview had several questions about the concept of swaraj. I also explained this understanding of Swaraj after asking the first question. However, the overwhelming and big take-away here is that almost no one in the village could imagine or think of development without the involvement of the Government i.e.: without top-down development policies and

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<sup>28</sup> Translated statement from my interview with ex gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

<sup>29</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a politician from the village in Kaluwala.

development works carried out by government bodies. A few of the respondents even understood the concept with Gandhi's concept of political swaraj, which means the ability of the people to self-rule and the village to be autonomous.

In my first interview, when I asked the member of Gram Panchayat about the concept and his opinion on it, he mentioned, "I have heard 'Swaraj'. That means how we are developing, how schemes are implemented, and this is swaraj."<sup>30</sup> After I explained the concept, he mentioned, "I think democracy is good, where everyone participates. I am not sure about Swaraj".<sup>31</sup>

Another person, the politician of the village equated the concept to Gandhiji's political vision of village self-rule and participative democracy. His reply was:

Swaraj is the democracy by people. Gandhiji, Vinoba bhave ji started it. The imagination behind swaraj is, fearlessness among people, there should be a balance between law and implementation, people should do their own work, fulfil their own responsibilities, this is swaraj."<sup>32</sup>

However, when I asked about the possible implementation of swaraj after explaining the concept, "No. I do not think it is possible entirely. But villages can be self-sufficient, focussing on being enough for themselves. But it is tough to remove democracy altogether."<sup>33</sup> The ex-panchayat member denied having any information regarding swaraj. An influential person knew what swaraj is, but when I asked about the implementation, he replied, "I am not sure how that is possible, as we are dependent on the government for so many things."<sup>34</sup> Most of my interviewees had no clue about swaraj and the ones who knew, could not imagine development without government intervention as most of them mentioned that it is almost impossible for them to be self-sufficient without the government support or cooperation. One of the housewives I interviewed, mentioned, "We do not care if it is 'swaraj' or anything else. We just need good health services, good education for our children."<sup>35</sup> When I asked the interviewees about whether or not they are an active part of policy making, one of the women replied, "No. When gram panchayat is elected, they come to us, asking for vote, that is when they ask about what we want. After elections, they forget us."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

<sup>31</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

<sup>32</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a politician from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>33</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a politician from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>34</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an influential person from the village.

<sup>35</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>36</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman from the village in Kaluwala.

One of my research questions i.e. ‘How do locals envision development and how do these visions fit with swaraj (do they want to be self-reliant, are there arrangements that allow them to be self-governed?’ can be answered as follows:

On-ground there is no conception of swaraj, as a model that can effectively challenge the western model of development. It exists in academia, in policy talks given by the government and there are surely isolated cases where the economic model of swaraj has been successful, such as in Mendha-Lekha village in Maharashtra state, which is self-governing village. Here, all decisions related to village are taken by the gram panchayat. Another example is in the state of Kerala, where a state-sponsored initiative, the People’s Plan process, created forums and options for villagers to carry their own development plans. (Dahmen et. al., 2018). However, in Kaluwala, as is clear from the answer to the swaraj related questions as well as the question about ideas of development, the western concept of development dominates in the minds of the villagers. Thus, the development critics, academics saying that this concept is an effective challenge to the Western idea of development could be overstating the case. Even after I explained the idea of swaraj, almost none of the respondents were enthusiastic about it, as they simply could not believe a world where development could be achieved without the involvement of the Government. In addition, there does not seem to be much awareness about the ecological aspects of this concept, as scholars such as Ashish Kothari mentions in his academic works. We can conclude that even though some of the alternative development practices such as ecological swaraj, El Buen vivir, Degrowth and others that are also mentioned in my literature review section are successful in some places on India such as Mendha-Lekha village in Maharashtra, People’s Plan in Kerala, however, there is no conception of these theories in most of the villages in India, including Kaluwala.

**5.3 Asymmetry in Feedback:** One thing that stood out was that different people had different opinions about the efficacy of the development work in the village. According to some people the village has all the information and services that people need, but according to other people, only certain individuals such as rich and influential people have the knowledge, information and the access to the services provided by government.

To back this statement, I will quote some of the phrases from my interviews, where we can notice the difference in people’s feedback. When I asked the politician about the implementation of policies, he replied:

Sabka sath, sabka vikas<sup>37</sup>. On ground level, everyone is developing. There is Ayushman card<sup>38</sup> for poor people, the poorest of the poor are getting the benefits worth 5 lakh INR (Around 6114 USD), we have ration cards, we have reservations for SC, ST, OBC section<sup>39</sup>. Several girls from our village have qualified in the exams for ‘Samooch Ga’ (Group C<sup>40</sup>). There is no biasness, no partiality in the village. Everyone is getting same benefits by the government<sup>41</sup>

When I asked the same question to one of the influential people from village, his reply was like that of the politician. According to him, “Yes, everything is implemented equally. I have never seen any sort of bias and partiality.”<sup>42</sup>

However, when I asked same question to a private worker, he replied:

The schemes are made for everyone, but everyone does not benefit from these schemes. If someone is poor, he/she do not know people with high influence, there is no chance of this person getting any benefits. If I know Gram Pradhan<sup>43</sup>, I will definitely be benefitted, however, if someone does not have the privilege to talk to Gram Pradhan, it is not possible for that person to receive any benefit.<sup>44</sup>

In one of my interviews with a construction worker, when I asked about the policies running in the village, he replied, “Only Gram panchayat<sup>45</sup> people know about it and the people who work under them have this information. They only talk about the schemes to the people they know, otherwise, there is nothing for us.”<sup>46</sup> In response to my question related to feedback, the same person replied, “The government does not care at all. If there is some welfare scheme, only influential people get the benefits out of it. If I have good relations with Gram Panchayat, then only they will tell me about the welfare schemes, policies, but if not, then nobody cares.”<sup>47</sup> In the answer to the same question, a woman who belonged to the most disadvantaged socio-

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<sup>37</sup> The English translation of this statement is, “Together, we all shall develop”.

<sup>38</sup> A health scheme that aims to provide an annual healthcare cover to poor families.

<sup>39</sup> SC, ST and OBC stands for Scheduled Cast, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Casts, respectively. These casts belong to the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India.

<sup>40</sup> A recruitment exam in India, for government services.

<sup>41</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a politician from the village.

<sup>42</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an influential person from the village.

<sup>43</sup> Gram Pradhan is a key decision maker, who is elected by the village-level constitutional body.

<sup>44</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a person working as a private employee.

<sup>45</sup> Gram Panchayat is the basic governing institution in Indian villages. They are responsible for the overall development of the village as they play a vital role in providing basic services to villagers.

<sup>46</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a construction worker in Kaluwala.

<sup>47</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a construction worker in Kaluwala.

economic background (Scheduled Caste)<sup>48</sup> replies, “I don’t know much because some people are aware, and some people are not. People who are aware about these policies are developing and people who are not aware, are not developing.”<sup>49</sup>

I found these responses very interesting. On the one hand, almost everyone agreed that development policies, funds and benefits were meant for everyone. And yet, there seems to be a difference in the level of access to the information about these policies. In other words, even though policies have been announced, there is possibly a cornering of the benefits thereof by the local elites. This also shows the mismatches between formal development plans and local aspirations, which is one of the research questions of my project. The impact of this difference, it seems shows up in the differing perceptions amongst different respondents about what kind of development work has taken place in the village.

One interesting aspect is the number of people who seemed to be satisfied with the levels of development achieved while also acknowledging the lack of proper healthcare facilities and the shutting down of the government school. Perhaps this cognitive dissonance can be explained by the level of propaganda in Indian media today.

#### **5.4 Involvement of Local Community in conceiving and executing development plans:**

Feedback seeking is a way of taking initiative to further develop and identifying ways to improve development planning and to evaluate the progress towards development and executing the planning efficiently, it is crucial for development authorities to take feedbacks, suggestions from the local communities, beneficiaries, and common people regarding their needs and aspirations.

In my thesis, one of my research question was to observe how much is the local community involved in conceiving and executing the development projects that affect their village and who is involved and how? To answer this, it was important to know if government and planning authorities take common-people’s opinions, their aspirations and feedback before and after implementing any development policy. For this data, I added questions related to feedback, reviews, audits, and suggestions in my interview. As a response, majority of people have said no to having any participation in development policies and planning. According to these people, the government does audits, but responses related to feedback scheme in the village

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<sup>48</sup> Scheduled Cast (SC) are the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India.

<sup>49</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who belongs to the most disadvantaged socio-economic background.



were asymmetrical. When I asked this question to the member of gram panchayat, he replied, “Yes, there are audits in Gram panchayat such as AG, CAG etc. (Comptroller and Auditor General) The government checks where we have spent the money that we receive. There is also an audit for MGNREGA.”<sup>50</sup> He replied negatively in having any involvement in policy making. To answer the question related to feedback, the influential man from village replied, “Yes, sometimes they come. They ask and take feedback regarding the policies that were implemented by the government”.<sup>51</sup> However, there were many people who said there is no option for them to give their feedback and their opinions. For example, a private worker mentioned, “No, never. Maybe they take feedback from someone but not from us. Maybe from influential people.”<sup>52</sup> A woman answered the question related to villager’s opinions as, “No. When gram panchayat is elected, they come to us, asking for vote, that is when they ask about what we want. After elections, they forget us.”<sup>53</sup>

To sum it up, majority of the villagers replied negatively about being an active part of policy making. Most of them answered that the government does not take their opinions regarding their needs/requirements before making policies. Regarding feedback and audits, many people agreed that audits are done in the village, however, several interviewees also mentioned that the government, politicians, ward members only visit them when they want votes during elections, after elections, they forget about all the promises. This answers one of my research questions about the involvement of local community in conceiving and executing the development projects.

**5.5 Self-Help Groups in Kaluwala:** One aspect of economic swaraj has to do with self-help groups which helps in inclusive growth and empowering marginalised sections of the society, as mentioned in literature review section. It is important to note that such groups were part of schemes initiated by the Government. To start with, the self-help groups are informal groups of people who come together to find ways to improve their living conditions. Here, people that belong to similar economic and social backgrounds associate with the help of NGOs and governments to improve their life. The origin of Self-help groups can be traced back to the establishment of Self-employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in 1972. Ela Bhatt, who

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<sup>50</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a member of gram panchayat in Kaluwala. MGNREGA is an employment benefit scheme in India.

<sup>51</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an influential person from Kaluwala.

<sup>52</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a person working as a private employee in Kaluwala.

<sup>53</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who belongs to the most disadvantaged socio economic background.

initiated SEWA<sup>54</sup>, organised poor and self-employed women workers in unorganised sector to enhance their incomes. In 1992, NABARD<sup>55</sup> formed a self-help group Bank linkage project and since 1993, NABARD with Reserve Bank of India allowed these self-help groups to open savings bank accounts (Bhatt, 1989). The importance and presence of SHG's<sup>56</sup> varies from state to state in India, and there are some states such as Karnataka, which are far ahead of others in their promotion and activities of SHG's. (Datta, 2003)

Kaluwala also had a number of SHG's, but my overall impression is that these are mostly for marginal activities that act as sources of supplemental income, especially for the village women. Also, the number of persons involved in such activities is not very high, especially if one considers the total population of the village, which is around 900. This came out through the answers to several of the SHG-related questions in the survey. First, when I asked about the situation of community work, SHGs to a woman from the village, she replied:

There are some groups of women in our village, such as group of 11 women, group of 6 women. They go outside the village to perform in dances etc. These women collect small amount of money every month and they can take loans out of this money on low interest rates such as 1 percent.<sup>57</sup>

Another woman who was working with these self-help groups mentioned:

We were taught how to make achar (Pickles). Two out of ten women are now selling these pickles. The government also taught us to make herbal colours. We did not buy colours from the market last year in holi<sup>58</sup>. Women make and sell herbal colours during holi festival. We also make 'Arse'<sup>59</sup> and sell them in different stalls. It helps women economically. They get money such as 10 thousand/20 thousand INR (122 USD to 222 USD) to increase their standard of living. The government does not take that money back."<sup>60</sup>

When I asked about the government support and the money that she mentioned, she replied, "Yes, these self-help groups get money to promote their skills and develop economically. There

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<sup>54</sup> Self Employed Women's Association.

<sup>55</sup> National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

<sup>56</sup> SHG signifies Self-Help Groups.

<sup>57</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman whose husband works in Indian army.

<sup>58</sup> Holi is an Indian festival that is played with colours.

<sup>59</sup> Arse is a local sweet.

<sup>60</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who is working with self-help groups in Kaluwala.

are 9 self-help groups under the Gram Sabha Sangathan<sup>61</sup>. They get 1.2 lakh INR (Around 1468 USD) after 6 months for better development.”<sup>62</sup>

I also asked my interviewees about the amount of money that these women associated with SHGs get, one to the interviewee replied:

There was a scheme for women, where they taught how to make achaar (Pickles) etc. We do not know if it was implemented or not. If someone sells these products, then only they can earn some money. The government said they will provide some money, but we will have to use our own money as well, but ladies said that they will only be able to invest money when they are able to sell something and earn something. Otherwise, where would we get the money from?<sup>63</sup>

The gram panchayat member answered the same question as:

The self-help work such as selling achaar (Pickles), selling flowers, that I told you about, is not full-time work, this is their part-time work for 1-2 hours, so these women do not have to depend on their husbands, their in-laws for small needs. Here, they can do their regular household chores as well as the self-help group work, so they can earn some money side by side.<sup>64</sup>

When I asked whether these groups are for other villagers, one of my interviewees, who was also a teacher in the village replied:

Yes, we have self-help groups for women. They are collecting 200 or 300 INR (2.65 USD to 3.65 USD) per month per woman and if any of these women need money, instead of going to banks, they can borrow money from this group at 1% per month rate of interest. We also have a group of farmers, I handle this group, where we collect 200 INR (2.65 USD) per month, and if any farmer needs help for pumps, for manure etc, we give them loans.<sup>65</sup>

After going through the interviews, and analysing the data related to self-help groups, the following points stood out to me.

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<sup>61</sup> Gram Sabha Sangathan is the primary body of Panchayati Raj system that keeps a check on the elected Panchayat members.

<sup>62</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who is working with self-help groups in Kaluwala.

<sup>63</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who is working with self-help groups in Kaluwala.

<sup>64</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a member of gram panchayat in Kaluwala.

<sup>65</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a teacher from the village Kaluwala.

Thus, the key take-aways from these questions also answer one of my research questions, i.e., ‘What can be done to increase the efficiency of these models/schemes especially considering the concept of 'swaraj' as discussed in the works of Ashish Kothari?’ The first take away was: While there is an appreciable presence of self-help groups in Kaluwala, they are mostly meant for marginal/part-time activities generating supplemental income and usually have a limited number of participants. Another key thing to note is that many of these SHG’s were initiated, set-up and planned by the Government with minimum feedback or autonomy for group members. This goes against one of the foundational aspects of economic swaraj, which advocates bottom-up development. However, if these self-help groups are promoted and supported, several women who were excluded from participating in economic activities and decision making can be given employment, power, and self-confidence, that Mahatma Gandhi mentioned in *Young India* (1930) (Gandhi, 1922). This can be a way to increase the efficiency of an alternate development approach named ‘Swaraj’ that Ashish Kothari discusses in his works.

**5.6 On ground development situation:** In the following points, I have consolidated the information I received during my interviews regarding development parameters.

**5.6.1 Health in Kaluwala:** According to World economic forum, there is a strong correlation between health sector and economic development of a country. India, which is a developing country is also struggling in providing good health care access to its population. Primary healthcare centres and sub-centres are often understaffed, there is lack of infrastructure, lack of services and most importantly lack of affordability for most of the citizens. According to NITI Aayog<sup>66</sup>, around 30% of Indian population which is around 42 crore people are devoid of any health insurance and this is the documented number, which implies the actual estimates are higher. Another cause of concern for healthcare in India is, Rural-urban disparity in health care system (Gangolli et al., 2005). Around 75% of the healthcare facilities are concentrated in big cities, where only around 30% of the total population resides (Patil et al., 2002). These 30% of the population lacks even basic medical facilities. The healthcare sector in rural parts is neglected in the country and most of the policies/programmes running for healthcare sector in the country are created and implemented by government, which makes them Top-Down and this is exactly what I found in my case study.

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<sup>66</sup> Policy Commission for Government of India.

To research about the ground situation of healthcare sector in village Kaluwala, I included some interview questions related to health care in my interview guide. The interview guide for my thesis is attached in appendix section. Firstly, when I asked the Gram Panchayat Member, some questions related to healthcare in village, he did not answer the question of health access for villagers. There was no mention of any hospital or healthcare infrastructure in the village. His reply to my question was:

For health, we have aasha<sup>67</sup> workers, for pregnant women. They get ration, such as chane (Black Gram), gud (Jaggery), lentils, eggs every month and the same services are given after the birth of child. There is also a kit named Mahalakshmi kit<sup>68</sup>, which is worth 8-10 thousand INR (Around 122 USD). This kit has shampoo, oil, almonds, cashew nuts, diapers, towels, clothes etc. This is given only when a girl child is born. They also get some money benefits, I am not sure exactly how much, but maybe 6000 INR (Around 73 USD) or so. There is a scheme called Nanda Gauri yojana<sup>69</sup>, where they give money to the parents after a girl child is born.<sup>70</sup>

However, when I asked the same question to other interviewees, I received responses such as “No, we do not have anything like that. If someone has a problem, they must go to Jollygrant or Doiwala, which is far from the village. There is no shop for medicines, chemists also”<sup>71</sup> and “No, there is no doctor. We do not have hospital and we must go to Bhaniyawala<sup>72</sup> if we need a doctor. There is no chemist also.”<sup>73</sup>

I visited the village and talked to many people that gave similar responses for healthcare access in Kaluwala. There was no hospital, no small clinic, not even a pharmacy to get medicines from. However, in many interviews, people talked about an aanganwadi<sup>74</sup> centre in the village, “We have aanganwadi, for kids. The aanganwadi workers visit houses. If there is any health

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<sup>67</sup> ASHA workers are community health workers by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in villages in India.

<sup>68</sup> Mahalashmi kit a government scheme in India for providing well-being products to mother and newborn girl child on the birth of first 2 girls or twin girls.

<sup>69</sup> Nanda Gauri Yojana is the name of a government development scheme for promoting the education of girl child in India.

<sup>70</sup> Translated statement from my interview with member of gram panchayat in Kaluwala.

<sup>71</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman whose husband works in Indian Army.

<sup>72</sup> A place for Private health services, which is at the distance of approximately 10 kms to the village Kaluwala.

<sup>73</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who belongs to the most disadvantaged socio-economic background.

<sup>74</sup> Aanganwadi workers provide child-care services and primary healthcare services to people (in particular women) in the village.

problem, the madams from aanganwadi give capsules and everything.”<sup>75</sup> Aanganwadi in India is a rural child-care centre that were started by Indian Government in 1975 as a part of Integrated Child Development Services Program for combating child hunger and malnutrition. They provide basic healthcare services such as contraceptive counselling, nutrition education and supplementation, basic medicines, oral rehydration salts etc. Even though these centres are impressively successful in Indian villages such as Kaluwala, as these workers are acquainted with people, local languages, live in the same area, have the insight of identifying problems and countering them. However, their services cannot be compared to the doctors and proper medical facilities as these workers are not fully educated and trained. Most aanganwadi workers are not well-literate and their knowledge and skills are limited. The access to proper healthcare services in village Kaluwala is less as people have to travel 8 kms., without any public transport, for basic healthcare services.

If we observe the patterns of bottom-up vs top-down policies in terms of healthcare sector, almost every plan or scheme including the aanganwadi is top-down. The aanganwadi is a government initiative and the workers receive salaries from government. However, a positive aspect of aanganwadi is the fact that aanganwadi workers are from the village itself, having the background, language skills of the same area, thus making their services more relevant and beneficial for the village.

The schemes mentioned by the member of gram panchayat such as Mahalakshmi kit where pregnant women, lactating mothers and their new-born children get nourishment and well-being products, is a state government scheme that is currently running in Uttarakhand state. (Uttarakhand Chief Minister Mahalakshmi Kit Scheme | Govt Schemes India, n.d.). The Nanda Gaura Yojana is a scheme for girl child of economically backward section, where they receive monetary assistance at the time of birth of the child (Indusnettechnologies, n.d.). Both schemes are an initiative of the state government of Uttarakhand. So, it is safe to conclude that in healthcare sector, in my case-study, almost all the development plans and policies are top-down.

**5.6.2 Education in Kaluwala:** Education is an important component of social and economic development of a country. It provides higher wages, pension, better job opportunities, more savings, growth of productivity of labour, growth of country’s competitiveness etc. In social development, education can be seen as a factor that improves the quality of life, provides better

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<sup>75</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an ex-gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

working conditions, improves work satisfaction, reduced unemployment, crimes, improves the health of people, develops equality, democratic values, attitudes, and cultural norms (Astakhova et al, 2016). In India, there are several programmes, schemes and policies that are running to promote education for all. I have discussed most of them in my literature review section. In this section, I will write about the aspirations, expectations, and satisfaction of people in terms of education in village Kaluwala.

To study the educational development at the ground level, I asked my interviewees some questions related to education in village. I tried to find about their level of satisfaction and suggestions that they feel are necessary to promote education in their village. First, I asked the politician about the education situation in the village, to which he replied, “There should also be some fundamental changes in education system. The children/students should receive professional education. The government should not change the education patterns so frequently”<sup>76</sup>

Here, the interviewee was talking about the recent change in education system in India, where the government wants to focus more on international syllabus, educational alternatives, computer-based education, and replacing the current 10 years of schooling; two years of secondary school; and three years of higher education with 5 years of Foundational education, 3 years of Preparatory school, 3 years of Middle school, and 4 years of Secondary school. (National Curriculum Framework (NCF)| National Portal of India, n.d.).

When I asked the same question to a housewife, she answered, “There are no schools in our area. We have to travel 7 kms to Bhaniyawala<sup>77</sup> for schools”<sup>78</sup>. Other women answered, “We had a primary school before, but it is closed now.” When I asked them the reason why the government school closed, a women replied:

People like to send their kids to private schools nowadays, if kids won't go to the government school, how will it survive. If government get better teachers like private school teachers, young boys, and girls, who are better equipped with skills, things can get better. Teachers before were 8th passed/9th passed<sup>79</sup>, so it needs to change. We will send children if they provide better teachers<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> Translated statement from my interview with the politician from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>77</sup> A town near village Kaluwala.

<sup>78</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman in Kaluwala.

<sup>79</sup> Teachers who were not educated enough.

<sup>80</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a common man from the village in Kaluwala.

I tried to ask people from the village outside these interviews, and they replied the same, that there are no government school for basic education in the village, and the ones that were there before, are now closed due to a small number of student enrolments.

In these questions related to education, some topics stood out for me. One of them was, closing of the government school for primary education that was there few years ago. According to most of the interviewees, the school closed because the teachers were not competent enough and the quality of education was not up to the mark. This shows the lack of government initiatives for better infrastructure, better teachers, quality of education, and good environment for students. Many people also mentioned about the inclination of parents to send their children to English-medium private schools, that they think are better as compared to the government schools. Here, we can see the private intrusion in educational sector, where private schools are providing better educational opportunities to the students, even though the education in these schools is costly. If the parents have money, they can enrol their children to private schools. If not, then government schools are the only option they have. It is like healthcare sector in India, where people can get better services and care if they are willing to spend more money. When I asked about women and adult education in village, almost all the answers were negative, that there is nothing for women and adult education. However, most of the interviewees seemed satisfied with this situation.

**5.6.3 Employment in Kaluwala:** The employment of a country is a key component of economic growth of that country. India, which is a developing country, with a population of around 1.4 billion people<sup>81</sup>, is currently struggling with high rates of unemployment. This fact stood out in my case study also. The interview questions had some parts where I asked about the employment situation in the village, and according to most of the interviewees, the village has a high rate of unemployment. In answer to one of my employment related questions, the politician from the village answered, “The unemployed youth is struggling too much. This is painful. The situation is same in the country, states and in every village also. The government is trying, but the efforts are not enough. It is crucial to focus on unemployment”<sup>82</sup>. When I asked about the percentage of employment from one of the interviewees, they replied, “Maximum 20-25%. Other than that, all are unemployed.”<sup>83</sup> In answer to the same question, the gram panchayat member replied:

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<sup>81</sup> According to World Bank data at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=IN>

<sup>82</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a politician from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>83</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a common man from the village Kaluwala.



In our village, some people are working in agriculture, some are growing sugarcane, that is also employment. Farmers also sell milk. Some people are working in factories, some have government jobs, some women are also working in hospitals etc. We focus on women employment also. I cannot say we have 100% employment, but if someone is willing to work, they have full employment opportunities.<sup>84</sup>

In his answer, he did not provide any concrete information regarding the percentage of the people employed.

There are some employment schemes that the government is running for addressing unemployment in India, such as MGNREGA, that I have explained in detail in the literature review section. MGNREGA is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which provides a job card to the youth where there is a provision of at least 100 days of work to provide guaranteed wage in a financial year. When I asked about these schemes in my interview with an influential person of the village, he replied, “Yes, there was scheme called MGNREGA, where people used to get work in construction. However, it is not currently active.”<sup>85</sup> A women said, “Yes, there are some schemes such as MGNREGA. But my husband works in government services, so this scheme is not for us.”<sup>86</sup> A person who was working as a daily wage worker in Kaluwala, replied:

The schemes are made for everyone, but everyone does not benefit from these schemes. If someone is poor, he/she do not know people with high influence, there is no chance of this person getting any benefits. If I know Gram Pradhan, I will definitely be benefitted, however, if someone does not have the privilege to talk to Gram Pradhan, it is not possible for that person to receive any benefit<sup>87</sup>.

This shows that even though the government has promised several unemployment benefits, policies, and schemes to provide employment on paper, there is no concrete scheme that is being practiced curing unemployment on the ground level. In fact, the information related to these schemes is not available equally for all. According to some people, only rich and influential people have the knowledge, information, and access to these services provided by the government. According to Sharma (2022), the youth population in India comprises of 43%

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<sup>84</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a member of gram panchayat in Kaluwala.

<sup>85</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an influential person in Kaluwala.

<sup>86</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman whose husband works in Indian Army.

<sup>87</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a construction worker in Kaluwala.

of the total population, with youth unemployment rate being around 25% for the year 2019-2020 (Sharma, 2022)

**5.6.4 Transport in Kaluwala:** The interaction between level and pattern of transport resources in an area is a critical factor affecting economic and social progress of that area. The fundamental benefits of good transportation and good connectivity are supporting economic growth, creating jobs, connecting people to essential services such as healthcare, education, work, and it should be considered at all stages of national and regional development planning. In developed countries, much emphasis was given to transport innovation during the industrial growth and even today, it is considered as a crucial development factor (Hilling, 2003). However, in developing countries, the modes of transportation in many areas are the cause of widespread concern (Simon, 2002). My data analysis shows similar problems that are being faced by the people of Kaluwala. According to majority of the interviewees, the road in their village is well developed, however, the access and connectivity to big cities is tough. When I asked about people's aspirations in terms of development, one of the interviewees replied:

Madam, we just want to link our road to the city road, so we have better employment opportunities, for youngsters. My own children are educated, but they are sitting at home. If we are connected to the city, we can open our shops or have some other employment options. But currently there is no development in the village, we must struggle outside for employment. Maybe, the government can start with constructing a bridge that connects our village to the city.<sup>88</sup>

Another interviewee who works as a construction worker mentioned, "We need transport. People who are rich, who can afford a vehicle, can go anywhere. But for people like us, it is tough to go from one place to another"<sup>89</sup>. A woman, who belongs to the most disadvantaged socio-economic background mentioned:

We do not have public transport. We have personal vehicles, but if it is not available, then we have nothing else. Also, not all ladies know how to drive, so there should be public transport. There are no Vikrams<sup>90</sup>, no public transports. We should have public

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<sup>88</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a villager who works in private sector in Kaluwala.

<sup>89</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a construction worker in Kaluwala.

<sup>90</sup> Little taxis are called Vikrams in India.

transport. We do not have money to book the cars or autos. If someone falls ill at night, there is no doctor or chemist in the village.”<sup>91</sup>

When I asked about her opinions about the development in her village, public transport was the most important concern for her. Another woman, who was a relative of a Gram panchayat member mentioned the same problem. In her words, “We want public transport here. Even though my family has two-wheeler and four-wheeler also, but for the rest of the village, poor people, it would be beneficial.”<sup>92</sup>

All the above answers point out the concern for public transport in the village. To deal with this, the government should focus on providing an easy and efficient way for people to access public transport. However, to improve the public transport system of an area, the costs can also be substantial. To tackle that, the government can discuss strategies to improve public transportation by merging advanced technologies with local knowledge and experiences to develop some cost-effective transport options. The government can also invest in rikshaws and autos for small distance travelling, which will also provide employment options for some people.

**5.6.5 Micro-Credit in Kaluwala:** Micro-credit is a method of lending very small sums to individuals to start or expand small businesses. These micro credits help in supporting poorest families by promoting self-employment by providing loans at small interest rates, that empowers poor people and helps them in being financially self-sufficient, which is the main objective of swaraj. This practice originated from Bangladesh in 1970s, when Mohammad Yunus, who was an economics professor at a Bangladesh University, started giving small loans to local villagers. This was a revolutionary idea where microfinance institutions such as Grameen Bank provide small loans without collateral to the customers who were written off by commercial banks as being unprofitable (Aghion et al., 2007). “By providing small loans to the extremely poor, the Grameen Bank offers these recipients the chance to become entrepreneurs and earn sufficiently high income to break themselves free from the cycle of poverty” (Sengupta & Aubuchon, 2008, p. 9). The same practice is now being promoted in many developing countries, including India.

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<sup>91</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who belongs to the most disadvantaged socio-economic background.

<sup>92</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who was from the same family as the gram panchayat member in Kaluwala.

There were a number of questions related to micro-credit in the survey. In response to these questions, one respondent, a member of the Gram panchayat replied:

The government is also providing a loan of 5 lakh INR (Around 6,115 USD) for women self-help groups, and this loan is interest free. People can also take loans of 1.5 lakh (Around 1,834 USD) and 3 lakhs (Around 3,669 USD) to promote self-employment.”<sup>93</sup>

To answer the same question, the ex-gram panchayat worker replied, “We get loans for cows, if people have cows, the government used to provide 50,000 INR (Around 611 USD), but they had to show the cow and the documents.”<sup>94</sup>

A teacher from the village mentioned:

Yes, there was something, the government advised the banks to give loans of 3 lakh INR (Around 3,669 USD) without interest, and many people have taken the benefit from that. My brother’s son has also taken a loan of 1.5 lakh INR (Around 1,834 USD) and he has opened a shop now. I am not sure if others have also taken this loan.”<sup>95</sup>

A woman who worked with self-help groups mentioned, “Yes, these self-help groups get money to promote their skills and develop economically. There are 9 self-help groups under the Gram Sabha Sangathan. They get 1.2 lakh INR (Around 1,468 USD) after 6 months for better development.”<sup>96</sup>

However, many people replied that they did not know anything about such loans. For instance, a construction worker mentioned:

No, there is nothing like that in our knowledge. Nothing for agriculture also. In our village, we have never heard of the word ‘Subsidy or incentives’. We got 2000 INR (Around 24 USD) per month for few months (Maybe 2 months), but it is closed now. During corona time, the government promised to give 2000 INR (Around 24 USD) to every farmer, but we got it for 2 months only.”<sup>97</sup>

Another person replied:

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<sup>93</sup> Translated statement from my interview with member of gram panchayat in Kaluwala.

<sup>94</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an ex gram panchayat member of Kaluwala.

<sup>95</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a teacher from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>96</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman who is working with a self-help group in Kaluwala.

<sup>97</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a construction worker in the village Kaluwala.

No, there is nothing for agriculture. For agriculture there is only one scheme where the government used to give 2000 INR (Around 24 USD) to farmers, every month, but we have not received the money from a long time. And only 2% people got that money. In whole state, I think maximum 5% of the farmers got it.<sup>98</sup>

A women mentioned, “No there is nothing like that. I do not have the information regarding any benefit that these groups of women get”<sup>99</sup>

These responses show that while the Government has a number of schemes in operation, the information regarding these loans is not equally distributed, A fear of bureaucracy and process also scares many people. In the words of one respondent, “Yes, we have heard in news, but people did not take benefits from these schemes/loans because they are nervous about loans<sup>100</sup>. Most of the people work in their small farms, so they do not take benefits from schemes where they must take loans etc.”<sup>101</sup>

So, my key take-away from this section is that though there are several schemes extended by the Government, not everyone has ability to access them. The Government needs to focus more on publicizing these schemes and the associated processes.

## **6. Conclusion:**

In this thesis I have explored the on-ground presence and implementation of alternative development approaches and theories suggested by development scholars such as Ashish Kothari, Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva and many others. These experts have effectively argued that factors such as local and regional economies, indigenous knowledge, cultural diversity, and human well-being should be at the core of any country's development plans. They have put forth alternative development approaches or models, which have been variously called 'Ecological swaraj', 'Radical Ecological Democracy', 'Degrowth' 'Swaraj' and 'Buen Vivir'. The current Indian government under Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi has also paid lip service to Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Swaraj which was all about empowering local communities through local self-rule. My study examined the reach of different development plans and welfare schemes in India, the prevalence of top-down vs bottom-up approaches to development and the role of national, state, village authority in implementation of these

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<sup>98</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a common man from the village Kaluwala.

<sup>99</sup> Translated statement from my interview with a woman from Kaluwala.

<sup>100</sup> According to the interviewee, most people avoid loans as they do not have enough credit, and they are nervous about their ability to pay the loans back.

<sup>101</sup> Translated statement from my interview with an influential person from the village Kaluwala.

schemes, by exploring a case study of a representative village called Kaluwala in Uttarakhand state in India. The primary data was collected using interviews, conversations, and interactions with people from the village to understand the functioning and dynamics of development.

I studied the conceptualization and execution of Indian development schemes in light of alternate development schemes such as 'Swaraj'. My main research question was 'How do the alternate development models and practices such as 'Swaraj' ensure participation and self-reliance at the local level (the one village chosen as a case study)?' To answer this question, I investigated the role and degree of people's participation and sense of involvement in development schemes. During my interviews, I tried to record and understand people's conception of development in their own words, tried to find out if they were aware of alternative development approaches such as 'Swaraj' and if they could relate to and imagine such approaches. I used 'Swaraj' as this concept was well known in the Indian development trajectory since the time of Mahatma Gandhi, who introduced it to promote village autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-rule. One of the key findings of this study was that even though the prevailing development constructs are being increasingly contested by critical scholars, the conventional notions of development still seem to be embedded in the minds of common people in India, who are aspiring to reach the standard of living and lifestyle of western societies.

The data indicates that while there are indeed a number of grassroot volunteer-based development programmes active in village Kaluwala, most of these development policies, schemes and programs have been conceived by, and are implemented and executed by the government. However, these movements cannot truly be called 'swaraj' as they have been conceptualised and organised by the government and thus are top-down rather than bottom-up programs. There are also micro-finance facilities available, though most villagers appear to be hesitant about taking these loans as they were not sure if they will be able to repay the money.

Another interesting phenomenon that was observed, was an asymmetry in the feedback or a disparity in the answers given to the same questions by different villagers. This also answers one of my sub research questions 'If there are mismatches between formal development plans and local aspirations, how can the mismatches be reduced/eliminated?' In my research, I observed that few of the respondents were very positive about the development work seen in the village, as according to them, the village had all the information and services that people needed, while other respondents maintained that while schemes and facilities were open to all, only the rich and influential had the required knowledge, information and access to truly take advantage of those schemes. It appears that there is some asymmetry in the information

available about various development schemes across different sections of the villagers. This showed the asymmetry and mismatches between formal development plan and local aspirations.

According to the bulk of the interviews I conducted, there is virtually no participation of villagers in policy making, or any mechanism to capture their feedback and suggestions. The government does not take opinions and ideas from the villagers, regarding their aspirations and needs for development, which is quite contrary to the idea of ‘swaraj’, in which people and local communities are supposed to take decisions. In Mahatma Gandhi’s conceptualisation of ‘swaraj’, true democracy is achieved when people decide what plans they need for their development and the approach is bottom up. However, as seen in village Kaluwala, while there is some form of political self-rule at the village level in India, through the institution of Gram Panchayats, most of the development programs and schemes are pushed down from the top level and are typically conceived of by government bureaucrats.

The most astonishing result of this study was that most of the respondents could not imagine development without government intervention. This view shows that even though many scholars are writing about autonomy and self-sufficiency as a way to development, it is the typical western conception of development that is not only present on the ground, but also continues to dominate the popular imagination in villages like Kaluwala. Even though the government claims that the people are being empowered through initiatives such as ‘Make in India’<sup>102</sup>, ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’<sup>103</sup>, ‘Self-Sufficiency’, ‘Self-Reliance’, ‘Swaraj’ etc., there are still many villages and regions like Kaluwala, where such bottom-up, community-based approaches are not even imagined by people.

These findings could perhaps be pointing to some shortcomings in the proposed alternative development approaches. For instance, many of these alternative development models seem to assume that communities and citizens are aware of the pitfalls of the western, capitalist, resource-extraction based model of development or that there is a desire for change in local communities. However, it seems these approaches might have discounted the effect of media and social media on the perceptions and aspirations of common people in the developing world.

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<sup>102</sup> Make in India is an initiative by the Government of India for encouraging companies to manufacture and assemble products in India.

<sup>103</sup> Self-Reliant India.

For there is a particular image of rich, developed countries that is seen not just in the media but in popular movies, music videos and social media and it is this that people watch and aspire towards. This came through in the survey as development for most of the respondents was imagined in terms of the prevailing model- roads, infrastructure, English education, healthcare and jobs.

This prevailing concept of development as well as the asymmetry in the respondent's answers also questions another of the key assumptions of theories like 'Swaraj' which seem to assume that local communities can imagine alternative futures and can effectively co-operate to initiate and execute their own projects. However, as shown by the different answers provided by different classes of people, local communities don't always live up to this ideal and can often feature significant inequalities, hierarchies, and competition within themselves. This brings into question their ability to co-operate for the common good or to take initiative and execute projects that benefit everyone.

This thesis has highlighted an important topic, which is the practicality of alternate development approaches in a common village. Finally, I would like to end by pointing at two crucial aspects. First, the purpose of this thesis is not to present alternate development theories as failures, but to contribute to the body of knowledge around these theories, so we are able to actually create robust alternative approaches that can challenge the current resource-based model of development. Secondly, the purpose of this research is to show the difference between academia and the real ground situation, so that these alternative development ways can be implemented efficiently at the ground level and contribute to rethinking ways of development from local experiences and initiatives to promote inclusive development. The on-ground implementation of such alternative approaches needs to be studied on a wider-level, by investigating to what extent such alternative conceptions are actually being implemented in different countries and regions of the world, how successful they are, and what lessons can be learned from them and how such schemes can be popularised.

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## **8. Appendixes:**

### **8.1 Interview Questions for Gram Panchayat Workers/Bureaucrats:**

1. What is development for you?
2. What are your opinions about development condition in your village?
3. What kind of government policies are currently running in your village?
4. How much money has been released by the government annually for development in your village?
5. How much money is being spent by you for the policies that have been running in the village?
6. Who does the audit to see if the policies are running efficiently in the village?
7. Who collects the data regarding the implementation of these policies?
8. How many people in your village are getting benefitted from these policies?
9. What do you think about the implementation of these policies? Are they implemented evenly in all sections of society?
10. What do you think about the education sector in the village? Is there any programme for education including child education, women education, adult education?
11. What is the situation of healthcare sector in the village? Do villagers have good health access? If yes, what schemes/initiatives have been implemented by the government to promote good health?
12. What is the situation of employment in the village? What percentage of people are employed?
13. What about the rest? Has the government initiated any programme/benefit/scheme for unemployed adults?
14. Have you ever heard of the word 'Swaraj'? If yes, what does it mean to you?
15. Is there any initiative or work done (Such as self-help groups, community-work) by villagers to supplement the income of their family? If yes, tell me more about it.
16. How beneficial is this community-based work and self-help groups in terms of economic gains?
17. Is the government giving providing any loan or incentives to promote small and medium enterprises in your village?
18. Are those incentives only for small/medium entrepreneurs or for people working in agricultural sectors as well?

19. What is the situation of women empowerment in your village? Are there any programmes/policies/initiatives where pregnant/lactating women get health assistance?
20. Are you and other people in your village an active part of policy making? Does government take opinions from you regarding your needs/requirements before making policies?
21. Which policy do you think is the most beneficial for the villagers? Is it a Top-down or a bottom-up policy?
22. Does the government take your feedback after implementing a policy? If yes, in what ways?
23. How satisfied are you with the electricity, connectivity (Internet), roads and transport conditions in your village?
24. What was the situation of development in your village 10 years back?
25. What do you think has improved or degraded in last 10 years?
26. What according to you are the challenges in implementation of the policies?
27. What do you think the government can do to better implement these policies?

## **8.2 Interview Questions for Villagers including farmers, daily wage workers, teachers:**

1. What is development for you?
2. What are your opinions about development condition in your village?
3. What kind of government policies are currently running in your village?
4. According to you, how many villagers (Approximately) are getting benefitted from these policies?
5. What do you think about the implementation of these policies? Are they implemented evenly in all sections of society?
6. What do you think about the education sector in the village? Is there any programme for education including child education, women education, adult education? If yes, how are you/your family benefitting from them?
7. What is the situation of healthcare sector in your village? Do villagers have good health access? If yes, have you or anyone you know taken benefit from these government initiatives?
8. What is the situation of employment in the village? What percentage of people do you think are employed?

9. What about the rest? Has the government initiated any program/benefit/scheme for unemployed adults?
10. Have you ever heard of the word 'Swaraj'? If yes, what does it mean to you?
11. Is there any initiative or work done (Such as self-help groups, community work) by villagers to supplement the income of their family? If yes, tell me more about it.
12. How beneficial is these community-based work and self-help groups in terms of economic gains?
13. Is the government providing any loans or incentives to promote small and medium enterprises in your village? Are those incentives only for small/medium entrepreneurs or for people working in agricultural sectors as well?
14. Is there any incentive for women's empowerment in the village? Are there any programmes/policies/initiatives where pregnant/lactating women get health assistance?
15. Are you and other people in your village an active part of policy making? Does government take opinions from you regarding your needs/requirements before making policies?
16. Does the government take your feedback after implementing a policy? If yes, in what ways?
17. How satisfied are you with the electricity, connectivity (Internet), roads and transport conditions in your village?
18. What was the situation of development in your village 10 years back?
19. What do you think has improved or degraded in last 10 years?
20. What according to you are the challenges in implementation of the policies?
21. What do you think the government can do to better implement development policies?

### **8.3 Interview Questions for women from Kaluwala:**

1. What is development for you?
2. What are your opinions about development condition in your village?
3. What kind of government policies are currently running in your village? What are the incentives you are getting from these policies?
4. According to you, how many villagers (Approximately) are getting benefitted from these policies?



5. What do you think about the implementation of these policies? Are they implemented evenly in all sections of society?
6. What do you think about the education sector in the village? Is there any programme for education including child education, women education, adult education? If yes, how are you/your family benefitting from them?
7. What do you know about the Right to Education? Tell me more about it?
8. How much liberty was given to you if and when you wanted to study?
9. What is the situation of healthcare sector in your village? Do villagers have good health access? If yes, have you or anyone you know taken benefit from any healthcare policy?
10. Is there any incentive for women empowerment in the village? Are there any programmes/policies/initiatives where pregnant/lactating women get health assistance? If yes, have you or anyone you know have taken benefits from that scheme/incentive?
11. Do you think you/other women have easy access to menstrual products?
12. Have you ever heard of the word 'Swaraj'? If yes, what does it mean to you?
13. Is there any initiative or work done (Such as self-help groups, community-work) by villagers to supplement the income of their family? If yes, tell me more about it.
14. Is the government providing any loan or incentives to promote small and medium enterprises in your village?
15. Are those incentives only for small/medium entrepreneurs or for people working in agricultural sectors as well?
16. Are you and other people in your village an active part of policy making? Does government take opinions from you regarding your needs/requirements before making policies?
17. Does the government take your feedback after implementing a policy? If yes, in what ways?
18. How satisfied are you with the electricity, connectivity (Internet), roads and transport conditions in your village?
19. What was the situation of development in your village 10 years back?
20. What do you think has improved or degraded in last 10 years?
21. What according to you are the challenges in implementation of the policies?
22. What do you think the government can do to better implement development policies?





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