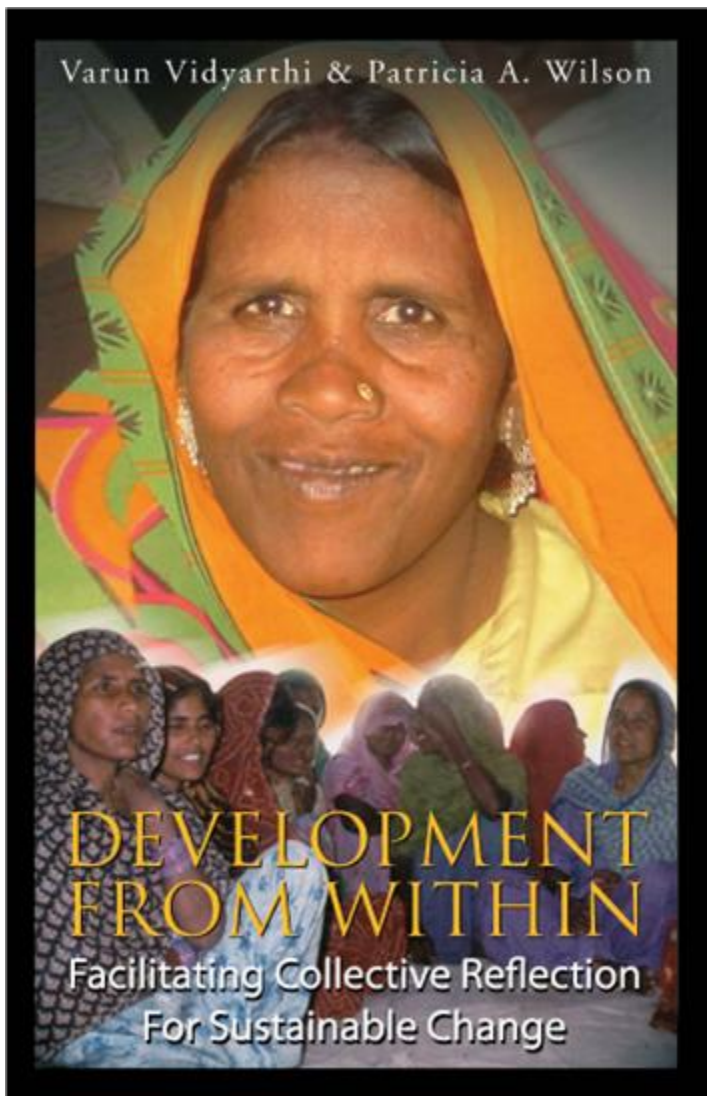


# Development From Within

Reading *Development from Within* by Varun Vidyarthi and Patricia A. Wilson is akin to embarking on an extraordinary spiritual and contemplative journey. The book's main core is a deeply reflective dialogue between Vidyarthi, the development practitioner, and Wilson, the probing academic. As a reader I felt privileged but welcome to listen in on their magical conversations. Their dialogue is an analysis of the groundbreaking work of Manavodaya, a grassroots-based development education and training institution in India, directed by Vidyarthi. Manavodaya's quest is sustainable social change and its key strategy is facilitating group consciousness. This contemplative yet practice-oriented strategy draws from the "Satsang," an Indian tradition of deep collective reflection. Wilson deftly frames Manavodaya's experience in the context of development planning theory and at the same time draws from this rich, field-based experience to build theory. Readers are encouraged to join in on this remarkable journey of reflection and theorizing from practice. The book is an innovative, unusually rewarding, and deeply moving must-read for development planners and community development practitioners.

Dr. Vinit Mukhija  
Professor of Urban Planning  
UCLA School of Public Affairs



It blew me away. It was as if Vidyarthi and Wilson had taken our own practice of microcredit and self-help, distilled it, and given us the theory behind our work. Very motivating to see the underpinnings spelled out.

**Mark Coats, RESULTS USA Ending Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

Reading it is a kind of personal experience. I felt I participated in the dialogue between the authors. An enlightening book for people of any profession, not just international development, planning, and social work.

**Bjarne Ovrelid, Faculty of Social Work, Lillehammer College, Norway**

You have had the courage and boldness to be and do in ways I have never managed. The way so much of this is based not just on your personal lives and experiences but on learning from the field gives the book credibility and strength.

**Robert Chambers, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK**

Reading *Development from Within* is akin to embarking on an extraordinary spiritual and contemplative journey. As a reader I felt privileged to listen in on their magical conversations. Readers are encouraged to join in on this remarkable journey of reflection and theorizing from practice. The book is an innovative, unusually rewarding, and deeply moving must-read for development planners and community development practitioners.

**Dr. Vinit Mukhija, UCLA School of Public Affairs**

A well written book and highly inspiring . . . I am glad that (the authors) have produced this aptly titled book to give the details, the philosophy, and the methodology . . . of Manavodaya's unique and extremely creative work in achieving the goals of development from within.

**Prof. R.P. Misra, International Centre for Gandhian Studies and Research New Delhi**

**T**HIS BOOK OFFERS A ROADMAP to sustainable social change from the inside out. The roadmap is born of over 20 years of experience in rural India with thousands of poor and illiterate villagers, especially women, who have learned to claim their civic identity and build their own organizations for change.

**T**HE JOURNEY BEGINS by facilitating small groups of people to engage in reflective dialogue. These small group dialogues, called *collective reflection*, initiate a process of collective learning and action. The values, attitudes, and skills of the facilitator are critical.

**T**HE LESSONS LEARNED apply not just to development organizations working in low income regions of the world. They apply to all of us who are, or want to become, catalysts and facilitators of meaningful and sustainable social change in our own communities and organizations, in the North or the South, whether privileged or oppressed. The roadmap begins inside each of us.

‘Development from below’ is not enough. The key to sustainable social change is development from within—i.e. change in individual and group consciousness that leads to collective capacity for self-management among people’s organizations. This book is a conversation between a practitioner and a scholar of participatory development exploring the inner and outer journeys of both development facilitators and women villagers. It is grounded in the experience of Manavodaya, a non-profit organization that has facilitated self help groups among rural poor and trained development practitioners in methods of dialogue and empowerment for over twenty years. The book presents a successful method of dialogue called collective reflection that has enabled significant changes in the lives of the participants—both development professionals and villagers alike.



Varun Vidyarthi has a formal background in engineering and business management. The Indian spiritual tradition of finding a purpose in life led him to abandon a corporate career to live and work in rural India. Formerly a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, and a Research Fellow at the East West Center, Honolulu, he is the founder and Chief Executive of Manavodaya (Human Awakening), a center of excellence in self help and values-led development.



Dr. Patricia A. Wilson is professor of participatory planning at the University of Texas, Austin, in the Community and Regional Planning Program. A follower of contemplative traditions herself, she writes and consults internationally on participatory development and civic engagement. She holds a B.A. in economics from Stanford and a Ph.D. in planning from Cornell.