CHAPTER VII

Factors Worked Favourably For The Rapid Implementation of The Schemes
Whatever developments in the rural field so far have been made are spasmodic, one sided, sectional and mostly cursory. A synthetic all sided and interconnected account of the rural social life however is not available and even its sketchy outline is absent. No systematic study has still been launched to study the rural society in all its aspects, to study its life processes in their movement and interconnections.

In the preceding chapters it has been noticed that Anna Hazare’s introduction of development programmes ushered in a series of transformation. However, mere planning and implementing the developmental schemes did not result in speedy development. Close investigations revealed that a number of forces and factors consciously or unconsciously brought about change in Ralegan Shindi.

In this chapter the factors that worked favourably for the rapid implementation of schemes are examined.

Proper Planning

The solution to the problem of rural upliftment lies in proper planning because without such planning no development could take place.

Anna Hazare thus planned and organised the exploitation of the resources to increase production and was responsible for stepping up the tempo of economic activity in general to the maximum possible extent. The basic goal was rapid
increase in the standard of living of the people, through measures which also promoted equality and social justice. Emphasis was placed on the common man, the weaker section and the lesser privileged.

The development schemes had been tailored to suit the local conditions. Specific problems of Ralegan Shindi were considered to be the base which contained the physical and socio-economic conditions at the grass roots level.

The upliftment was to be directed towards reconstructing the social fabric. To reconstruct Ralegan Shindi's society it was therefore necessary to study not only the economic forces but also the social, ideological and other forces operating in that society. Anna Hazare played a decisive and significant role in reconstructing Ralegan Shindi's people on a higher basis. A new conscious endeavour was made to bring about an overall change in the rural social life.

Anna Hazare felt that mere enforcement of reforms would do more harm than good. Therefore the process of change had to be gradual and carefully planned in accordance with the aspirations of the rural people. Again it was necessary to know the level of social, economic, cultural and political aspirations of the people before introducing any new development programmes.

Anna Hazare says, in the beginning one has to be very cautious and less ambitious because it is very important that confidence of the people is gained. Taking on too much too
soon could create opposite effect and retard progress. Anna Hazare thus made a modest beginning and extended the scope of activities gradually. Only such projects that directly benefitted the people had to be taken. It was only through such projects which brought direct and immediate benefit to the villagers that development was possible.

It was also wrong to assume that the village is poor. Anna Hazare says that the village is never poor but the villagers are poor. What Hazare realised was that the village was rich in resources and that these resources had to be systematically and carefully exploited to the advantage of the villagers themselves.

Anna wanted to cautiously develop Ralegan Shindi. He thus approached the rural phenomena simultaneously from all angles. A synthetic approach to the rural problems laid the foundation for the effective and all sided improvement of Ralegan Shindi.

The change in the village life has been thought to be brought about by concentrated efforts and an integrated approach making an assault on all facets of the rural life in the village through a single multi-purpose aim of upliftment of the village Ralegan Shindi.
Religion

It is true that for any developmental programmes opportunities for people’s involvement and their participation in various aspects of development project brings in positive results. For this, first the confidence of the people has to be won by bringing them together on a common platform.

At Ralegan Shindi the re-building of the village temple brought the villagers on a common platform. The temple was the "Heart" of Hazare’s movement. In our country as we know from our past experiences that the temples or religion are used for separatist activities. But here Anna used Religion as a force for bringing the people together. It is from here, all the developmental activities are planned and put into action. All along the day the temple is crowded with people attending prayers, religious discourses and the most important of all, meetings of socio-economic nature.

Anna Hazare’s Selflessness

His first project after retiring from the army was rebuilding of the ruined village temple. For this he did not ask the help of the villagers financially or otherwise, but went ahead and used the Rs. 20000 which he received after voluntary retirement from the army. This selfless act attracted the villagers, the village youths being some of them, whom he slowly organised into a strong youth group. It is this transparent selflessness that had endeared "Anna" to the villagers.
Harnessing of youthful energy

The harnessing of youthful energy was very important for development activities. It was this band of dedicated youths that could bring about social and institutional changes. The youth listened to 'Anna' with fascination, his dream about uplifting the village. They became partners in agricultural and rural development. Their activities later on included individual and group projects in agricultural and allied fields community service including group marriage and library, health, hygiene, sanitation and sramadaan.

The youths also played a major role in shutting down of illicit distillaries and were also successful in their fight against alcohol consumption. They also played a key role in "Anddha Shraddha Nirmulan" (Eradication of blind faith).

Initiating the people to give up liquor

Liquor had blighted the lives of Ralegan Shindir's residents. Stopping of illicit distillaries had put a full stop to drunkards and gamblers. Thefts and brawls became rare. The residents got a new meaning to their life as gambling was also clamped down with heavy hands.

Anna had thus, developed a "community" sense and a feeling of solidarity in the village propaganda against the evils like illicit distillaries and gambling. This was a part of a wide programme for bringing about a rapid increase in the standard of living.
Eradication of Traditions and Customs

Rural India is still tradition ridden, rural masses are still trying to maintain their own traditions and adhere to their social values. Many of the traditions and values are good since they represent their culture and heritage. However Anna felt that progress could not be made by sticking to outdated customs and values. Inhuman customs and values had to be substituted by values and traditions which are more advantageous. Ills like goat slaughter at the annual festival, superstition, misinterpretation of religious myths were all stopped. The people were awakened out of their ignorance and they were convinced that disease and famine had to be fought successfully by the villagers themselves.

Unity

Anna Hazare realised that the age old supremacy of caste sanction had to be abolished. All round development could not be possible if one section of the society still did not get the benefits of the development programmes. People were initiated to think beyond caste barriers to come together, to work together for the upliftment of the village. The eradication of untouchability encouraged cooperation in work and in all activities of life. Thus at Ralegan Shindi the unity of caste and kinship had been advantageous but what really lasted was the unity born out of social idealism, which has been demonstrated. The village unity had a marked bearing on all the factions among the villagers. People belonging to various castes, religions united to take up common village development programmes.
Role of Education

It is needless to say that education has an important bearing on the development of human knowledge, skills and attitudes. However at Ralegan Shindi the problem was in deciding the nature and content of education and the methodologies of imparting it. Though formal education was given importance, in the context of widespread illiteracy prevalent in Ralegan Shindi, emphasis had been laid on non formal education also. Non formal education like functional literacy and adult education had lot of utility in their day to day activities either in their interaction with nature or people. It was meaningfully and functionally linked to the immediate requirement of the people and their socio-cultural and physical environment.

It was felt that the people needed certain amount of awakening from their dormant state as reflected in their fatalistic outlook towards life which the formal education was incapable of bringing about. Thus at Ralegan Shindi, emphasis placed on the importance of adult education conceived more in terms of "awareness" and "functionality" components, went a long way in the people taking advantage of the development activities. The villagers had developed a positive attitude towards cooperation. Thus the disadvantaged were resocialised through education so that they could become participants in the real sense of developmental efforts for well being. Literacy had helped them in absorbing the economic opportunities and enjoy the benefits arising out of it. Again human development was also essential which
developed their reasoning ability and their capacity to perceive and understand the issues relevant to them, so that they could face the problems individually.

Peoples Participation

The experience of community development projects in India indicates that in our anxiety to achieve targets in comparatively shorter periods we ignore the important principle of working with the people. The result is frustration and more harm to community development. Anna Hazare says that it was therefore necessary that while working with the people in order to organise them, to meet their socio-economic needs and to have a better quality of life for them, the people themselves should be involved in the process.

As against the government machinery staffed by intelligent, hard working and conscientious persons which has not still assimilated the true spirit underlying the entire programme of rural development which is operated more as an executive assignment, Anna Hazare was successful in involving the villagers themselves.

The government machinery relies more on propaganda and spectacular results rather than group work and voluntary participation. However, the very basis of Anna Hazare's programme was active participation of the people.
At Ralegan Shindi opportunities for people’s participation in various aspects of development projects not only created a feeling of ownership but also a positive attitude towards the development process itself. Anna Hazare encouraged participation of the people, regardless of their social or economic position, based on mutual respect to realise the only objective and that was the development of the village.

Encouragement for people’s participation prepared the ground for creating opportunities for people to get a feeling that they were wanted and have a say in the on going activities for their benefit. Nurturing a sense of participation among the people in the way it was conceived at Ralegan Shindi, did provide opportunities for development of human potentialities to the maximum extent.

At Ralegan Shindi the concept of development was conceived as an integral process of economic and social development with social justice. It was an interrelated process of change involving not only economic and social but also cultural and human factors. It demanded the active participation of all people. Thus development became a reality with the involvement of the people.

**Motivation**

Anna knew that any attempt to bring about improvement or upgrading of the village life by governmental edict or command would fail. That with sympathetic counselling, expert
guidance and some financial assistance the villagers could be motivated to recognise their most immediate and acute problem, to think about them, formulate plans for their solution and put these plans into action. Thus motivation of the people could be harnessed which ensured their involvement in the developmental programmes. Anna says that motivation potential to some extent is present among people but to harness them for the purpose of development required an approach involving both understanding the felt needs and promising them better lives.

Though planning in the right direction helped in speedy development, the creation of incentives for individuals rather than use of force was consistent with Anna's philosophy. Individuals had to be motivated because Anna realised that the programmes that did not motivate or satisfy the need and interest of the villagers were bound to be self defeating.

Success with the first improvement developed individual pride and group satisfaction and led towards the desire for further improvement. That after a couple of years, successive improvements in agricultural production, water supply, health measures, education and other opportunities completely transformed the village life not only in its physical amenities and improved economic status but also in the mental attitude and behavioural patterns of the villagers. Helplessness was replaced with determination, apathy with ambition and indifference with pride and accomplishment.
Self-reliance and self help

The main aim of Anna Hazare was to make the rural population increasingly self-reliant. People had to be involved not only in planning but in implementing as well. He therefore wanted inputs from outside agencies in terms of monetary resources to be minimal. Monetary resources were made available from the bank. Viable projects were executed successfully by the villagers by avoiding the temptation of accepting donations and making the villagers dependent on such doles.

The village was poor in financial resources but Anna Hazare could not ignore the fact, that people's participation, contribution in kind and more so, voluntary services had to be given equal if not more importance. It was through sramadaan that the reconstruction of percolation tank, building the boys hostel, the lift irrigation project and afforestation programmes were carried out.

Because of self-reliance and self-help it had passed the true test, that is, it had survived, grown, spread and became permanent. In other words it had characterised itself by self sustaining, self generating and self perpetuating, as against the large number of project sponsored activities which are directed along the lines of traditional government drive's which value the completion of physical targets and too little attention is given to the question of finding out whether the movement is really acquiring roots in the village society or not.
Anna looked upon the development programme as an approach to local development, as a part of the bigger scheme of planned national development. As a process it involved changes of economic, social, political and psychological nature. Anna wanted to stimulate the local potential for growth in every direction. The promise was of reciprocal advance in both wealth and welfare, not on the basis of outside charity but by building on the latent vitality of the beneficiaries themselves with the minimum outside help.

Embracing all governmental activities

Anna's programme was directed to the task of village upliftment. It embraced all the aspects of governmental activity in the field - the improvement of agriculture the combating of soil erosion, planting of trees, preserving of water, development of water supplies, the promotion of cooperation and better marketing and peoples contribution in the form of labour and locally available materials etc.

The villagers studied each and every scheme and started taking advantage of them. However the following major problems of any government sponsored programme with disparity in it benefits which are well recognised were all avoided by Anna Hazare.

1. Its bureaucratic nature.

2. Absence of elective principle at any level.
3. Decisions taken at the top and communicated below almost like executive fiats.

4. Considerable confusion in the overall administration of any social development programme.

5. Absence of social service mentality.

6. Lack of dedication and social work attitude among the staff.

Media

Media like newspapers, radio, film and T.V. have been able to serve effectively the cause of transformation of Ralegan Shindi. It has been effective in creating the necessary awareness among the masses about the efforts the government and other institutions have been making for bettering their lot. The media also served to lay ground for the necessary motivation that occurred among the people of Ralegan Shindi so that they could make use of the government programmes for their socio-economic development. Necessary information support at the grass roots level, at the stage of adoption of various developmental programmes and their consequent absorption of benefits in a majority of cases was taken through modern media.
Dedicated Personnel at the grass-roots level

Experience indicates that most of the plans and programmes in rural areas of development do not bring the desired results because of lack of personnel in different rural institutions who can work with missionary zeal, initiative and purpose. In many cases it has been found that they do not work with sincerity of purpose and action and corrupt and undesirable practices amongst most of these personnel are not rare in the rural institutions meant for rural development. It is difficult to have dedicated and able personnel with an integrity of purpose and action.

At Ralegan Shindi there was a slow process of change brought about by Anna Hazare. With honesty, dedication and unselfishness Hazare has spearheaded a movement that has led the village to all round prosperity. Today Ralegan Shindi is a village which can be looked up to. It has not only overcome drought but paved way for social and economic development through Annas untiring efforts single handedly.

Anna initiated coordination of many sided developments by creating initiative and teaching the villagers the importance of organised efforts on the principle of making provision for their mental as well as physical development. His central theme was to change the village from tradition to modernity and to make the villager worthy of his existence. The impact of his towering personality had galvanised the villagers into a corporate entity.
He realised that he had to lead the villagers towards
initiating a process of transformation in the socio-economic
life of the villagers, to begin with and to work as an engine
of economic growth at a latter stage, for energizing and
mobilising the available manpower resources in the village,
so that, the semi stagnant economy of the village could be
rejuvenated and revitalised.

Even more remarkable is the social transformation that
Hazare has brought about. His aim was to secure full
development of the material and human resources of the area
thereby raising the level of living by destroying the enemy
of the village viz. poverty, ignorance and disease.

The command and skill of Anna Hazare that could hold
the fellow villagers together for the purpose of adoption of
certain innovations, did initiate a qualitative change in the
set pattern of relationships of the village. Anna Hazare's
skill was unquestionable in inducing the villagers to
participate in "shramadaan". Priority was given to common
village programmes. As for himself his contribution was
mainly in terms of demonstration and advice.

His task was directed towards man making. For Anna the
most important thing was not the immediate material
improvement like ample food grain, enough water, health and
sanitation but the change in the outlook of the people,
instilling in them an ambition for a richer and fuller life
by developing the capacities of the individual so that he
could master matters for himself.
Drought-Proofing

Maharashtra is subject to frequent failure of rains and the results are famines. The vagaries of monsoon are proverbial, making agriculture an extremely precarious industry. Frequency of failure of crops due to drought caused endless miseries to the cultivators of Ralegan Shindi which had no reserves to fall back upon in times of distress. To a farmer there is no calamity greater or more severe than the total or partial failure of crops.

The problem seemed to come full circle every summer — the socio-economic life going awry and there were common sights of dry fields and parched land with wells, streams, water harvesting structures all going dry.

Short of rain over the past and facing a chain of reaction of misery had seen short term measures, inadequate and uneven in their spread. Technical details however do not bring about the human tragedy nor the real dimensions of the tragedy.

A method of breaking out of the cycle of drought and reducing the agony of the people required drought proofing.

Thus at Ralegan Shindi the issue was not of short term relief measures, (which are important) but the long term plans for drought proofing. Therefore measures had to be taken that could hopefully prevent the recurrence of the problem. Since the whole issue of drought hinges on water, a
long term drought prevention plan aimed centrally at reducing the dependance on erratic rainfall, a feature so characteristic of this region was drawn. This was done in two ways, by extending artificial irrigation sources and by introducing cropping pattern that did not require large quantities of water.

The crucial task before Anna was however to stop the run off of whatever rain water was available. Thus at Ralegan Shindi building contour trenches to store rain water, construction of percolation tank, digging of new wells, nullha bunding helped in storing every drop of water. Thus fundamental drought proofing activities had to be undertaken in an organised fashion. The vegetal cover also had to be increased by fast growing trees that also help in conserving rain water, so afforestation schemes were undertaken.

Self-supporting agriculture

Experience indicates that for any rural development to be self sustaining it is essential that it includes a self supporting agriculture. That's what Anna Hazare did, his drought proofing programmes which included a percolation tank, nullha-bunding, digging of wells etc. helped in his agricultural development programmes, which provided in financing overhead facilities and services on a continuous basis.

Thus a self supporting agriculture was a key to self-sustaining development of Ralegan Shindi.
Environmental Improvements

Scientists have developed methods to reuse waste material but it needs an enlightened approach. If we have to have all that, it has to come from the villagers themselves. Adequate measures had to be undertaken to improve the environment at Ralegan Shindi. Schemes which were economically and socially viable like community toilets, gobar-gas plants, bio-gas plants, smokeless chullhas, windmill, created an atmosphere for development and proved conducive for the village people to think more and more in terms of development. Thus more and more people were made environment oriented through environment improvement strategy.

Improvement in environment had induced the people of Ralegan Shindi for better standard of living and such a feeling once generated had effectively channelised for meaningful rural development activities. Anna thus feels that unless the people taste the experience of better environment, it may be difficult to have them march ahead.

Labour using minor development works

Since labour intensive agriculture could not be provided year round and the distillaries having been shut the villagers with Anna’s help took up employment generating minor development works with high labour content. They included building of hostel, repair of percolation tank, nullha bunding, digging of wells and carrying out
afforestation programmes. This not only provided them with work but also helped them in earning their livelihood.

Unanimous elections

Generally political parties play a very active role in the village life, it may be either the Panchayat, Gramsabha or Cooperative Society. These elections generally provide a forum for the more agressive and exploiting sections of the village scene and family disputes and caste antagonisms vitiate the elections. Dominant caste or dominant family play a very influential role in such elections, resulting in unworthy people dominating the village scene.

Anna wanted no elections to take place thus eliminating political parties from the scene and creating proper environment for freeing the village from homogeneous influencing centres like caste, kinship and individual families.

Anna encouraged the practice of political parties eschewing from local politics and achieved unanimity in elections, thus keeping away vested interests of the village who took the protection of the ignorance of the mass villagers and were successful in keeping the village defunct. Thus there is no dominance of any caste, family or political party.
Bank

Before the bank's arrival the village money lender was the important source of borrowing. He charged exhorbitant rate of interest thus making the villagers indebted to him. Their need for ready money to pay off land revenues, family burdens like marriage, sickness compelled them to dispose of their crops at a loss or take loan from the village Mahajan.

But with untiring efforts of Anna Hazare Bank of Maharashtra has come to the door steps of Ralegan Shindi's residents.

After the bank opened its branch at Ralegan Shindi the risk of the production operations like drought, accidental break down of machinery, unsuspected defects in seeds and manures, infectious plant disease were all shared by the bank. Loans for buying cows, bullocks, implements, infact everything which agriculture requires were offered by the bank. The people no longer had to turn to the money lenders. Thus the bank played a very crucial role in the developmental programmes of Ralegan Shindi.