CHAPTER IX

Demonstration Effect and The Publicity Given to The Schemes
A close look at the rural reconstruction programme in India indicates that whatever developments have been made in the rural field so far have been spasmodic, one sided, sectional and mostly cursory. However there have been some experiments by strengthening the agricultural economy, developing the infrastructural facilities, providing social benefits, taking into consideration human and cultural factors, stimulating the peoples creative urges in resolving their problems which spoke adequately about Rural Development. However many of them failed to become models. Ralegan Shindi situated in Parner Taluka of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra looks like any other village except that today it is in the lime light. The village Ralegan Shindi and its environs are a testimony of what a dedicated voluntary agency, enthusiastic people, far sighted programmes can do in seemingly impossible conditions. It has become a "model" village and scores of villages have adopted the same type of strategy.

In this chapter we examine the demonstration effect and the publicity given to the schemes.

The village Ralegan Shindi suffered from physical isolation from urban centres, paucity of resources, drought, untouchability, alcoholism, gambling and crime, poverty, primitive customs and traditions but it overcame these difficulties by dint of its imaginative, constructive and unified leadership of Annasaheb Hazare.
In what was once an arid waste in this perennially drought prone zone of Maharashtra, the village which a decade ago suffered from severe drinking water scarcity nothing to say of agriculture, in a decade, has been transformed into a rich green verdant place. It has also provided the much needed alternative to the present irrigation strategy based on big dams.

Short of rain over the past and facing a chain of drought which had played havoc, the village and its environs have become a successful challenge to the agrarian basis of economic backwardness that characterises most of the region. In so far it suggested a method of breaking out of the cycle of drought, meriting consideration.

Today Ralegan Shindi is brisk and prosperous. With honesty, dedication and unselfishness Anna Hazare has spear headed a movement which has passed the true test, that is, it has survived, grown, spread and become permanent.

Today Ralegan Shindi is self sufficient. A sense of pride and glory prevails everywhere, for now, Ralegan Shindi is being identified with the national movement for "Rural Development". As the people of Ralegan Shindi affirm, it is not only their economic progress of which they are proud of but it is their flowering into complete human beings of which they are proud today.

However Anna Hazare is not happy with this. He says that the happiest moment in his life would be when all the
villages in India are fully developed. Each village must become self sufficient. Today many young and old from all corners of the country visit Ralegan Shindi. They plead with Anna Hazare to give guidance to them. On their invitations he visits many villages. After initial survey, he proposes the schemes to be undertaken, the direction in which development has to take place. "Development is in our hands only we must have the will to develop" says Anna. This will require men and women of sterling qualities to come forward.

As Anna Hazare puts it, "when you see a Kanis (sheaf) heavy with jowar grains swaying in a field, remember that one grain had to bury itself alive in the ground to create this miracle. You may feel that by burying itself the grain is destroyed. But it does not die. Instead, it creates thousands of grains. What rural India needs is activists like that grain". However there is still an absence of zealous and properly oriented village level workers which is the need of the hour.

Today Ralegan Shindi boasts about being:

Nations First Centre For Training Volunteers In Rural Development

The first centre for training volunteers in Rural Development in India imparting information regarding rural development starts from Oct. 1990. The story of Ralegan Shindi is one of enlightenment. A story of rural village making survival a reality. What Ralegan Shindi has achieved today is an example for other villages to follow. For this
reason the above said programme will be started with the firm backing of government of Maharashtra's chief secretary Mr. Paranjape, and Mr. B.G. Bhide a social reformist. Volunteers from the villages of Poona, Latur, Dhulia and Beed numbering more than one thousand have shown keen interest to participate in the programme. The candidates will be called for an interview. They will be selected on their overall personality including their interest in rural development, during their three days stay at Ralegan Shindi. A batch of 100 candidates will be selected and admitted in the first year of the two year residential programme. At present all the expenses of the programme including food, residential hostel accommodation will be met by the villagers.

"The above said programme covers every aspect of the village life" said Anna. It creates an awareness that would help promote growth and change through planned step by step action. Ralegan Shindi itself will provide as a model and all the schemes undertaken will be studied in detail.

The students will be taught about the role they are required to play in the context of rural development, that would go a long way in creating a favourable climate for the growth of individuals and emergence of selfless leaders.

Anna Hazare says that instead of mere formal educational qualifications, interest in social work or rural upliftment work will be the basic criteria. Services of professionals from universities will also be taken. Anna says that any individual with minimum intelligence, general sense, dedication together with this orientation programme may
emerge successful in facing various challenges of the countryside, which would have been difficult, as of today, without proper training.

Great attention will be paid towards agriculture, health, animal husbandry, irrigation, forestry, fodder, water management etc. The participants will be made aware of all the governmental activity in the field, those which were embraced by Ralegan Shindi and those which have been introduced of late.

Anna Hazare looks upon this programme as an approach to local development, as a part of the bigger scheme of planned national development.

Enquiries

Hundreds of letters pour in each day, some to know about the development programmes, some for advise and others convey the message that they have also started their work.

In his reply to the letter from the then Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to the village sarpanch which Anna had received, Anna Hazare had two points to make in his reply to the Prime Minister. First he objected to the Prime Minister’s statement that the powers regarding village development would be transferred to the sarpanch. If the powers were to be transferred to the sarpanch, he would be all powerful and lord it over the village. Shri. Hazare wants them to be transferred to the Gramsabha. Secondly, Shri. Hazare has
objected to the point in the Prime Minister's letter, that the proposals regarding developmental projects in the village should be sent to Panchayat Samiti for approval. This would, he fears, lead to delay and frustration. He wants that the projects be approved by the Gramsabha itself by two thirds majority so that they would get the full backing of the villagers.

Now that the fame of his village work has spread, he is in constant demand and spends almost twenty days in a month outside participating in seminars and propagating his ideas.

Mr. Sharad Pawar the Chief Minister of Maharashtra was so impressed by the success of Ralegan Shindi that he has sought the assistance of Mr. Annasaheb Hazare at the grass roots level for rural development programmes.

**Visit By Luminaries**

It has also drawn the attention of people from all over India. Even foreigners visit the place. Many luminaries have visited the place, they include former governor Mr. I.H. Latif, Mrs. Bilkees Latif, Mrs. Shanti Sadiq Ali, many political leaders like Mr. Shivajirao Moghe, Mr. Ulhasrao Pawar both MLA's, M.P.Yeshwantrao Gadhak, former MLA Mr. Babasaheb Thube, Mr. Nanaji Deshmukh of Gramvishwa who pioneered the Gonda project in Beed, Mr. Balasaheb Bharde of Gandhi trust, officials from Tata Rural trust, Many industrialists including Mr. Navalbhai Firodia, Editor of Daily Lokyug Mr. Govardhanbhai Barshikar, Collectors of many
districts, officials from forestry department, officials from Bank Of Maharashtra, officials from Zillha Parishad have visited the place. All of them were very much impressed by what Anna Hazare had done and one and all said that such things must be followed by other villages.

The Maharashtra government's chief secretary, Mr. D.M. Sukthankar also visited Ralegan Shindi to study its progress.

Dr. N.H. Antia of the Foundation For Research In Community Health also paid a visit to Ralegan Shindi.

Mr. P.V. Barve, the project director for District Rural Development in Pune also visited Ralegan Shindi.

Mr. Zumberlal H. Sharma, the secretary of the Maharashtra Harijan Sewak Sangh, who visited Ralegan Shindi said that ideally it should be easily possible to eradicate alcoholism as in Ralegan Shindi. But unfortunately, in many places politicians own liquor bars.

It has also become a picnic spot. Students and staff of agricultural institutions, educational institutions, water and land management institutions come in buses and spend their day at Ralegan Shindi enjoying their stay as well as learning from what Anna Hazare has done.

The President R. Venkatraman's daughters and sons-in-law are to visit Ralegan Shindi in September 1990. When Hazare had been to Delhi to receive the 'Padmashri', the
president’s wife Mrs. Janaki Venkatraman invited him to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He explained to the President’s family about the various development schemes under taken and about his future plans. Taking note of the keen interest the President’s family were taking in his work he took the opportunity of inviting them to Ralegan Shindi and see for themselves the work done there. A communiqué from Rashtrapati Bhavan has confirmed about the acceptance of Shri. Anna Hazare’s invitation to Ralegan Shindi.

Awards

It also gathers special importance because on 19th Nov. 1986 the then honourable Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi presented to Mr. Anna Hazare the prestigious "Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Puraskar", at Vigyan Bhavan. The function was largely attended by, apart from Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, his cabinet colleagues and other ministers and dignitaries. Prominent among them were Mr. Bhajanlal the then minister for environment and Dr. Kamala Chaudhary, President of Waste Land Development Board.

In 1980 Ralegan Shindi got the first prize in the district for propagating eradication of untouchability.

Anna Hazare was also selected for Gentleman magazine’s "Man of the year" award for 1988. The award is in recognition of the resilience of the country’s agriculture despite last years unprecedented drought and the pivotal role of the farmer in the national economy.
Anna Hazare has also been awarded the "Krishibhushan" by the government.

Anna Hazare was decorated with "Padmashri" on 26th Jan. 1990 for his service to humanity.

However these awards do not carry any meaning to him although these awards have given wide publicity to his work.

Unfazed by these awards he still carries on his daily routine of social service. Recently because of steep rise in the S.T. fares and electricity rates, which affect the common farmer most, Anna Hazare has lodged a protest with the government. He has also undertaken 'Maun Vrat' to support the above cause. He has also threatened to return the three government awards namely 'Padmashri', 'krishibhushan' and 'Vrikshamitra', if the government does not take appropriate steps in reducing the S.T. and electricity rates. He has held the transport and energy ministers responsible for corruption and losses and has asked for their resignations. He has also asked for an enquiry commission to be set up to enquire into the working of S.T. and electricity boards.

Research Work at Ralegan Shindi

Hazare is critical of the government policy of sinking bore wells as an anti drought measure. They are very dangerous. Excess pumping of water in the coastal areas of Saurashtra has resulted in the sea water seeping into the dry underground acquifers. Consequently borewells dug up to 10 kms inland yield only salty or brackish water.
However the water balance in Ralegan Shindi is very satisfactory. "The Ralegan Shindi experiment in rural upliftment is unique in many respects", says Prof. R.K. Patil, a Pune based researcher and social worker who is studying the water balance in Ralegan Shindi.¹

Hazare’s planning is down to earth. He says, that if the country has to change, it is necessary to change the man first. But until the village does not change, the man cannot change. Planning for development, therefore, must start from the village—the principle enunciated by the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for their dream of a free, powerful and prosperous India, but forgotten by the rulers since independence. "Most of the leaders and the people now think that if there is change in Dilli, there will be change in the gully. But Gandhiji and Vinoba Bhave believed that until the gully was changed, Dilli, would not change", he says, driving home his point: "Planned use of water is vital", Hazare continues, "In this village, you will not see anybody growing sugarcane". They had thus proved that the amount of water and time used for one crop of sugarcane could give three crops of vegetables, the total value of which is more than three times the value of sugarcane. They were successful is exporting "bhendi" (ladies finger). Sugarcane has grabbed most of the canal irrigation water in Maharashtra, the state with the maximum number of large dams in India. So much so, that the Drought Relief and Eradication Committee, chaired by the eminent economist Dr. V.M. Dandekar, recommended to the state government that canal irrigation should be supplied for only eight months every
year - to cut down production of sugarcane - and the water saved be supplied through an expanded network of canals to save crops in the event of drought or an extended dry spell during the monsoon. This, felt Dr. Dandekar, was the only way to "drought-proof" the state. (2) Hazare is dead against cultivation of sugarcane in the present set-up. "When canals are constructed and water flows", he says bitterly, "sugarcane sprouts up and money flows. Consequently, moral values break down and all kinds of vices flourish in the village". Many villagers after Ralegan Shindi's experiment on not growing sugarcane crop, have also abstained from growing sugarcane. Shri. Sharad Joshi of Shetkari Sanghatana, Maharashtra was very appreciative of Anna Hazare's decision of not growing sugar cane crop inspite of having sufficient water and his experiment of growing vegetables instead of sugarcane crop.

Two researchers, Dr. Ramesh Awasthi and Mr. Dashrath Panmand, recently completed a socio-economic study of the progress made by the village since 1975.

An evaluation of the Ralegan Shindi project conducted by Prof. R.K. Patil, K.R. Datey and Suhas Paranjape for the Centre For Applied Systems Analysis in Development (CASAD) shows that 32.5 percent of the fuel requirements of the village have been met by bio-gas and gobar-gas units. (3)

Top officials of EGS schemes including Mr. Shankar Menon, secretary of Employment Guarantee Scheme visited Ralegan Shindi to study the percolation tank and to tackle the problem of poor quality of work and corruption that mars such works.
A Bleak Landscape: Ralegan Shindi a hope says Anil Agarwal, Padma Shri. A consultant to the Planning Commission on matters of development and environment.

Anil Agarwal is a mechanical engineer from IIT Kanpur who founded the Centre For Science And Environment in New Delhi. He was an assistant editor for the publications of The International Institute of Environment and Development, London.

Anil Agarwal’s work has been recognised. He has received the first A.H. Boerna award from the Food and Agricultural Organisation in Rome (1979), the Fifth Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Award from the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (1979) and the 'Padma Shri' from the Government of India (1986).

Agarwal was invited to deliver the 13th Gandhi Peace Foundation lecture in New Delhi in 1987 and was also elected to the Global 500 Honour Roll by the United Nation’s Environment Programme the same year. At present he is a consultant to the Planning Commission on matters of development and environment.

Regarding a question as to what action is required for better water management, Anil Agarwal points out at Ralegan Shindi, where Anna Hazare got his fellow villagers to build 35 nullha bunds and a percolation tank. Even at the height of drought in 1986, cultivation continued unabated. Agarwal points out that apart from creating such small harvesting
systems on a massive scale, water must be used with maximum efficiency for the maximum public good, as against big dams and canals and sugarcane for instance a crop which uses water intensively should not be permitted in semi arid areas.\(^{(10)}\)

At the moment, there is too much stress on big systems rather than small water harvesting systems, for which Agarwal says understanding of hydrology, ecology and political economy is a must. He further adds that like Ralegan Shindi the fundamental principle of water management should be to hold every drop of rain water where it falls. If it falls on a slope, there should be a tree on it. If it falls in fields there should be terracing or contour bunding. If it falls in a village, there should be a village pond or tank or series of tanks. Thus as for capital-intensive and resource intensive water management programmes, Agarwal says Ralegan Shindi has an answer which has found out technological alternatives which are neither capital-intensive nor resource intensive. Only then could there be some improvement. Agarwal is also emphatic about imbibing traditional and cultural practices that promote conservation and points out that Ralegan Shindi can teach a lesson in this respect.\(^{(11)}\)

**Doordarshan**

Doordarshan at the regional level has been asked to develop programmes for rural masses. At the national level also special programmes on rural technology, water management, conservation etc. are shown.
At the Regional level Anna Hazare's development programmes have been repeated a number of times in "Aamchi Mati Aamchi Manse" to demonstrate to the viewers that such things are possible and that they could undertake such projects.

At the National level also the development of Ralegan Shindi has been shown, in the national telecast.

The television serial 'Virasat' also has sought to highlight the terrible damage that has been done to our environmental heritage, sometimes unknowingly often deliberately. This serial has certainly had an impact on urban as well as rural audiences.

Co-produced by Aruna Vasudeva and Chidananda Das Gupta under the aegis of INTACH (Indian National Trust For Art And Cultural Heritage), it is a pilot project designed to raise the consciousness of the people.

Virasat shows you the picture, it is black and bleak. It is a familiar story-years of drought, people and cattle die, the land is barren and lifeless. Then the rains come heavy incessant, a good monsoon. Finally there are floods, more lives are lost, animals are wiped out and the soil washed away. A national debate follows, dams get built afforestation is undertaken but the story still repeats itself each time more destructively. Virasat, a thirteen part tele serial on the conservation of our heritage tells us how the damage is wrought and why. The scenes are heartrending
and everybody wondered how it happened? For, individually all the viewers were responsible but however it offered an occasional glimpse of hope, of an individual effort creating a brave little oasis, of communities still resisting the vicious pull of commerce and civilization, there by keeping alive their traditions that keep them and their villages green in the midst of drought. The message has come out boldly, that is, something has to be done, and done very fast, the Ralegan Shindi way. Virasat has thus helped in awakening the people because they could see every thing right in front of them, most of them, had of course heard of it or read it in the news papers.

Following Ralegan Shindi’s Example

Technical details do not bring out the human tragedy that is drought, nor the courage of the men and women that faced it. In the Kasabahal village of Kalhandi district in Orissa, the media consistently unearthed instances of death from starvation – shocking the nation that had thought that the spectre of famine was firmly a thing of the past. Thousands of men, women and children – mainly small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and tribals the worst affected in any calamity – deserted their homes in Orissa’s Bolangir and Kalhandi districts. Every day more and more began their long journey to cities in MP and Andhra, in search of employment. (12)

In Thanjavur, the famous rice bowl of Tamil Nadu, six lacs of landless agricultural labourers were out of work as a
result of failed monsoon and faced a near starvation situation.\(^1\)

Thirty five year old Annem Raju, a progressive farmer of Prakasam district became the 17th peasant to commit suicide in Andhra’s chronically drought prone Rayalseema region, by consuming endosulfan. However it was not an act of cowardice, it came at the end of a seven year long battle against drought.\(^2\)

In desperation, with no prospects of employment the villagers of Aruntharambulam village sold their vessels to local pawnbrokers for 50 paise per kg. Then with nothing left to sell, they took to chopping down trees to sell for firewood, so that they could buy rice, the price of which had shot up to Rs. 4/- per kg. from 2.50 per kg.\(^3\)

However the picture is the same and widespread in Indian villages, that of devastation and deprivation. These were examples of failure in the struggle of India’s farmers to scratch a living in the face of overwhelming odds.

However a decade ago worse conditions than the above mentioned existed at Ralegan Shindi. But today Ralegan Shindi has turned its back on drought. Hazare who is the prime force behind this transformation helped in eradicating drought from the village, showing the country and the world that it can be done and with indigenous technology. Employing the technique of what Anna Hazare calls “Sarvagin laghu paan lot-kshetra vikas” (comprehensive micro-watershed development) a miracle has been wrought about.
No other village of the same size in India has so many facilities like gobar-gas, bio-gas, high school, hostel, medical aid centre, lift irrigation, grain bank, a cooperative, a bank, to name a few. The wind, sun and water are all tapped and every drop of water is preserved and used. Thus the story of Ralegan Shindi is an inspiration to the thousands of hamlets still struggling under the yoke of backwardness. The drought cycle which was becoming shorter year after year was totally squashed. The story of Ralegan Shindi is a documentary of such a development, an experiment in the regeneration of environment.

Scores of villages in and around Ralegan Shindi and from other parts of Maharashtra have adopted the same development strategy. Many more are on their way. A few villages which have adopted these measures have been examined.

**Pimpalner**

Situated in Parner Taluka and about 3 kms. West of Ralegan Shindi, is popular for its saintly person known as Pimpalnerkar Maharaj. The population of the village is around 1800.

There is a primary school which conducts classes upto the 4th class. Previously after finishing the 4th class the children used to stop further education. With Anna Hazare’s encouragement now the children go to Ralegan Shindi for further education i.e. upto 10th class thus increasing literacy.
The girls from this village get married off at Ralegan Shindi’s group wedding programme. This has been a clear deviation from tradition.

There is now a medical aid centre managed by a midwife. People have become health conscious and are taking the help of this centre.

Pimpalner was lucky enough to get the water of lift irrigation from the Kukdi. When the project of lift irrigation was sanctioned for Ralegan Shindi, only Ralegan Shindi could benefit from it. But the villagers thought that they could not look only to their personal needs. They wanted the villages through which the pipeline goes also to get benefit of the scheme. Accordingly amendments were made at the administration level and the scheme was changed to benefit Pimpalner also.

Now Pimpalner gets water of the Kukdi through lift irrigation project of Ralegan Shindi. This has helped in irrigating about one hundred twenty five acres of land, water has come as a blessing to Pimpalner.

Keeping Ralegan Shindi as a model the villagers of Pimpalner also decided against growing of water intensive sugar crop.

They also have dug up two community wells for the village. Afforestation programme also has been taken up. Fruit bearing trees have been planted. Like Ralegan Shindi many ber (barrow) trees have been grafted.
The Gram Panchayat of this village now does not hold any elections.

**Siddheshwarwadi**

Siddheshwarwadi situated to the North West of Ralegan Shindli is about 9 kms. from Ralegan Shindli in Parner Taluka.

It is very famous for its Lord Shankar Temple. Every year in Shravan i.e. in June/July, there is a big fair (Jatra) known as Siddheshwar Sravan Yatra. People of the nearby villages throng this place for the darshan (pay respect) of Lord Shankar.

The village now has a percolation tank, which was built by "Sramadaan" by the villagers, following the example of Ralegan Shindli. The percolation tank has helped in firming up of water in the nearby wells and 4 new wells have been dug up. With percolation tank and the wells the agricultural produce of the village has considerably increased.

Inspired by Anna Hazare's development programmes, Siddheshwarwadi in its own way adopted certain measures. The people of the village have vowed not to consume liquor. Now nobody drinks liquor at Siddheshwarwadi.

There is a Primary school which has classes upto 7th class. The villagers are now encouraging their children to go to school, not only that but after passing VIIth standard since no further education is available the children are
encouraged to go to Ralegan Shindi or Ganibuire where they can study upto Xth standard.

Jategaon Bhairoba

Situated in Farner taluka it lies East to Ralegan Shindi about 8 kms. away.

The village is very famous for its deity Bhairoba. Many people from other villages and Taluka come to this village to pay obeysance to Bhairoba.

Unfortunately there is no source of irrigation at this village. But however every rain drop is stopped by nullha bunding, bandhara and by contour terracing.

Since agriculture could not be carried out in this village the people here were distilling illicit liquor. But coming to know of Ralegan Shindi's progress the villagers held a public function in their village presided over by Anna Hazare. They vowed never to operate illicit distillery units or consume and sell liquor.

At the Gram Panchayat no elections are held.

There is also a primary school which has classes upto 7th standard. After passing the VIIth standard the children both boys and girls are encouraged to go to Ralegan Shindi or Naryangavhan for education upto Xth standard.
They have formed a cooperative milk society like Ralegan Shindi. About 500 ltrs of milk is collected everyday except during summer when the milk received is about 100 ltrs. only. The milk is then carted to Narayangavhan where there is a milk chilling plant.

Panoli

Panoli village which lies to the North of Ralegan Shindi is about 7 kms. from Ralegan Shindi. It is a different village in the sense that it is a purely communist village.

Being communist did not deter them from following Ralegan Shindi’s example or to that extent Anna Hazare’s advise.

Panoli is also very famous because, the Tatas have dug a very big community well in that village.

The village will now have two percolation tanks. Work on one percolation tank is in progress. The people are building this tank with sramadaan. The villagers also hope to dig wells down stream the percolation tank.

Like Ralegan Shindi the people of the village have decided not to grow sugar cane crop.

NSS camp of Arts and Commerce college of Parner is generally held here once a year. The function is generally presided over by Anna Hazare. Afforestation schemes have been undertaken by the NSS students.
The village has two gobar gas plants installed under the aegis of Anna Hazare. There is also one bio gas plant attached to the community toilet. Thus the gobar gas plants have not only become fuel suppliers but also as manure suppliers.

At the Gram Panchayat no elections are held.

It also has a primary school which has classes upto the 7th standard. The children of the villages are encouraged to go to Ralegan Shindi or Parner for completing their high school.

Vadegavhan

It lies about 7 kms. south to Ralegan Shindi on the Ahmednagar Pune road.

There was a primary school in Vadegavhan but with Anna Hazare’s help now they have a high school.

They could also benefit from the lift irrigation project of Ralegan Shindi as the Kukdi canal just passes by the village. Initially the project of Ralegan Shindi for lift irrigation could benefit only Ralegan Shindi. But amendments were made at the administrative level and even Vadegavhan could benefit from it. Now about 60 to 75 acres of land could be irrigated by this project.

There is also a high school now. Many sports activities have been introduced in the curriculum, keeping Ralegan
Shindi as a model. Extra coaching to the Xth standard students is given free of cost. Girls are also encouraged to enroll. After completion of Xth standard the children are encouraged to join college, for which they have to go to Sirur.

A branch of Ahmednagar District Central Cooperative Bank has been started. The director of this bank Mr. Vitthalrao Shelke is a close associate of Anna Hazare.

A veterinary aid centre is also operating now. All the farmers are now taking advantage of this centre. Artificial inseminations are also done. The death of animals due to disease has considerably reduced.

They also have started a milk society which collects about 500 ltrs. of milk per day. The milk is then carted to Narayangavhan which has a chilling plant.

About five gobar gas units are operating here.

Narayangavhan

It is situated in Parner taluka and lies 6 kms to the South East of Ralegan Shindi. It lies on the Nagar Pune road.

There is now a high school which is attended by both boys and girls. The children are encouraged to study and after passing Xth standard those who are interested in further studies have to go to Sirur.
It also has a chilling plant which receives about 15000 ltrs. of milk per day from the neighbouring villages. The milk is then sent to Poona.

Like Vadegavhan and Pimpalner, Narayangavhan also could get benefit of the lift irrigation scheme of Ralegan Shindi. About 60 to 75 acres of land is now being irrigated. They have undertaken afforestation scheme as well. The villagers with the school children's help have been successful in making the programme a success.

Two community wells have been dug up with the help of the villagers. There is a community farm too.

A veterinary aid centre was also started. The villagers bring in their animals for treatment at this centre. Now because of this centre very few animals die due to disease.

Vadner Haveli

Situated in Parner taluka it is about 8 kms. to the South East of Ralegan Shindi.

The people of Vadner Haveli no more take liquor. They have vowed never to consume liquor which had blighted their lives. They held a function presided over by Anna Hazare where they publicly vowed not to touch liquor.

Today untouchability is also loosing its force at Vadner Haveli. The Harijans of the village share the same
well from which other villagers draw water. Their children are also encouraged to attend school.

There is a primary school upto the IVth standard. The children are encouraged to go to Ralegan Shindi or to Parner for high school education.

A percolation tank has been dug up by the villagers with their own labour "Sramadaan". The villagers avoided the contract being given to any outsider. All the technical aspects were looked into, thus the tank did not go the Ralegan Shindi way. It has helped in increasing the water levels of the nearby wells, which in turn has helped in agriculture and farming. There are fruit farms too, growing ber, guava, sitafal etc.

At the Gram Panchayat also the villagers are now abstaining from contesting elections. This has kept politics out of the village. There is unanimous election at the Gram Panchayat.

**Parner**

Parner Taluka is 16 kms. North to Ralegan Shindi. Famous for its saintly person Parnerkar Maharaj many people visit this place to pay respect to him.

It is also famous for its Datta Mandir and Bhairoba Mandir. During Diwali period there is a big fair known are Kal Bhairav Jayanti which is held every year.
It has a bus depot. Now the strength of the buses at this depot has increased to 55 buses.

With Mr. S.B. Chavan and Mr. Vikhe Patil's initiative, the Parner sugar cooperative factory was started at Devi Bhoire in 1985.

A youth club has been formed. Many college students have joined this youth club. These boys and girls take active part in social and cultural activities. Like Ralegan Shindi they also have played a major role in eradication of primitive customs and practices. Previously at the Kal Bhairava Jayanti many goats used to be sacrificed. But with the youth club's initiative this inhuman practice has been stopped. Functional literacy has been started by youth club, special books by the people have been given to the children.

Adult education has also been popularised. Those who could not read nor write are now able to at least identify numbers and words.

Group weddings have been started and have become very popular. People have started taking advantage of this way of marriage where less money is spent. Group weddings are conducted twice in a month.

The village now has two high schools.

The Arts and Commerce college of Parner was opened in 1977. Now they even have science faculty up to the XIIth.
The following banks are providing facilities to the people:

1. State Bank of India
2. Central Bank of India
3. Land Development Bank
4. Ahmednagar Development Cooperative Bank

The people avail loan facilities for agriculture, buying of land and animals etc.

There are two milk societies which accounts for 1500 ltrs. of milk which is collected per day and is then carted to Narayangavhan.

Supa

Supa is 20 kms. to the East of Ralegan Shindi and is on the Nagar Poona road.

It has a high school as well as a Junior college which has been recently started. For college the children are encouraged to go to Parner. NSS (National Service Scheme) of Parner college is usually held at Supa once in a year. Anna Hazare usually presides over the function.

Central Bank of India has opened its branch at Supa which gives loan to farmers for animals, land, poultry farming etc.
There is also a branch of Ahmednagar District Cooperative Bank.

A percolation tank has been dug up by Sramadaan by the villagers. All the villagers joined hands in building up the percolation tank. Because of the percolation tank the ground water level has increased considerably resulting in rise of water levels in the near by wells. Five more wells were dug up.

With the availability of water the farmers instead of going in for agricultural farming have gone in for Jhendu and Shevanti flowers. Supa is very famous for its Jhendu and Shevanti flowers which are sent to Poona and Bombay.

A veterinary aid centre has reduced the death of animals due to diseases. Artificial insemination is also carried on.

There is a cooperative milk society which collects about 600 ltrs. of milk daily. This milk is sent to the Narayangavhan chilling plant.

Kutte wadi

Kutte wadi is a small village in Parner Taluka of Ahmednagar district. The village being chronically drought prone, was always short of water not to speak of agriculture. Out of the 50 families who inhabit the village, only one
family owns about 60 acres of land and the rest own less than 10 acres of land. The land had a scarred and lifeless visage, with not a blade of grass to be seen until 1987. Out of the 50 wells in the village only three had water. The principal means of survival for a large population of the village here was to migrate for six months a year to irrigated sugar-cane growing areas for work. Illicit distillaries was another business to fall back upon.

But keeping Ralegan Shindi as a model the villagers under took nullha bunding and every drop of water was stopped from running off. The result was that the water table increased reasonably. Now most of the wells have water during summer months. Though agriculture cannot be carried out in summer, they do not have drinking water shortage. Afforestation programmes were carried out. Fast growing, fuel trees were planted. EGS schemes were started for the villagers.

The people of the village have vowed not to distill illicit liquor and totally gave up liquor.

Villages in Pune district

Some villages from Pune district have started development work keeping Ralegan Shindi as a model. They are Soneri and Kerakavade from Purandar taluka. Kondhanpur, Rahatvade and Kalyan near Sinhagadh have also started community development work.
"Sramadaan" and stopping illicit distillaries at Gavdevadi near Manchar started some three years ago has transformed the village from backwardness to progress. Community wells were dug up and two and a half lacs of trees were planted in and around the village. The survival rate was ninety percent.

Villages in Beed district

Dambri Begre village has successfully adopted many village development programmes including modern agricultural practices like Ralegan Shindi.

Villages in Marathwada area

In Mohara village in Kannad taluka, a meeting of the villagers was called. Many decisions were taken. One and a half lacs of trees were planted by "Sramadaan". By "Sramadaan", the old dilapidated boundary wall was constructed anew. Earlier the elders of the village visited Ralegan Shindi and saw for themselves the progress they had made.

Mr. Shankar Menon, the secretary of EGS (Employment Gurantee Scheme) said, an integrated village development programme has been launched through the EGS on the Ralegan Shindi line. A big horticulture programme has also been undertaken under the EGS.
Mr. P.V. Barve, the project director for district rural development in Pune, said it has proposed to develop 50 villages in Pune district on the lines of Ralegan Shindi.

Nearly 20 villages in Dhule, Kolhapur and Satara districts have adopted the same development strategies.

As Anna Hazare has said that "when you see a kanis (sheaf) heavy with jowar grains one grain had to bury itself alive in the ground to create this miracle. Like wise, for the developments that took place in so many villages which were backward and struggling under the yoke of poverty, Ralegan Shindi was responsible. They had followed the path of Ralegan Shindi to all round development. Ralegan Shindi was their inspiration."
References


