

# The Tale of a Model Village

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The rural population in India lives in primitive setting. Access to electricity, necessary education and health services are by and large a distant dream. Modern technology has not touched these people, even after many years of independence. Rural poverty which is leading to large scale migration to cities is a leading to a serious urban problem. Ralegan Siddhi was plagued with many problems like poverty, drought, and liquor. Its story was no different from the story of many such villages across India.

Around 1975, the picture changed. With the passage of time the village which was plagued with poverty and many other ills became a model village for entire India.

## Response

The improved view of Ralegan Siddhi is because of the motivation and dedication of one man called Anna Hazare. When he came back to the village in 1975, he saw the village in utter distraught. He wanted to change the way the village was. The first and the foremost important task were to provide enough food to eat.

Anna understood, knowledge cannot be gained on an empty stomach, the villagers have to be fed properly, and they have to be provided with jobs for a living.

Idea of scientific farming practices leading to sustainable agriculture was what he thought would be the solution. The participation of the entire community especially the youth could revive the village. A youth society and a village assembly to spread ideas were started by Anna. These helped Anna, speak out against one of the larger problems plaguing the village – alcohol, and eventually eliminating it.

## Actions taken

How did the village turn a new chapter? It all started by the motivation of the leader “Anna Hazare”. He not only supervised but led by example. He encouraged the village community to contribute its labour to rebuild the village temple and from then on the story of a model village took shape.

Water management was the first problem that was to be resolved. Huge Water tanks which could store rain water and also fill the wells with water were built. Percolation tank which was constructed was the beginning to resolve the problem. In 1975, the tank which could not hold water, Hazare gathered people to voluntarily repair the embankment. For the first time in the living memory of the people, the seven wells below it swelled with water. The second problem of soil erosion was curbed by stopping the cows to graze openly and felling of trees was discouraged and if a tree was cut, five trees had to be planted in its place.

Once the village had enough to sustain, education was emphasised by building the village school on a voluntary basis. A considerable transformation was managed through the work and collaboration of all the villagers and the devotion of a charismatic man.

Today the village is self sufficient in food grains and other necessary agricultural produce. The villagers tender Community service after finishing their daily routine. A sense of community and involvement among all the people is prevalent. Ralegan has shown the world how the whole system can stand on its own legs from scrap. It demonstrates the power of unity and the need to take charge of our own development for a sustainable environment practices. Today, there is no longer any poverty as the village sustains water year round. It also boasts of a grain bank, a milk bank, and a school.

## Learning

1. Water management can lead to sustainable farming.
2. Leadership by leading: Say it, do it, coach it, live it.

3. Innovation at the grass-root level can be turned around for larger good.
4. Adversity can be turned into opportunity.

### **Questions**

1. Differentiate between individual style of leadership and collective leadership?
2. What are the qualities of a good leader?
3. Community service should be an integral part of education? Elaborate.
4. The case of Ralegan Siddhi has demonstrated that feelings of ownership, empowerment and accountability are properly established, the necessary group dynamics come to the fore in creating wonders. Discuss
5. Discuss the applicability of Maslow's Theory of needs in the case of Ralegan Siddhi.

### **Course Positioning**

The caselet is suitable for a course in HR / OB, and Rural Development . The caselet highlights certain concepts like participatory approach, group dynamics and role of leader, water management, sustainable farming and requirement of innovation at the grass root level.

