

## **Agricultural Education in India.**

BY

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The importance of agricultural education as a method of facilitating the diffusion of scientific ideas and practices in regard to agriculture has been sufficiently recognised to render the discussion of the subject welcome to all who are interested in the agricultural progress of the country. It was not until after half a century of Indian Education that thought was bestowed on its serious defects and solutions were attempted. It reflects, therefore, no small credit on those interested in agricultural education that, so early in the history of it, they have set about finding the correct lines of advance. These efforts are no doubt part of the general reaction from the tendencies of Indian Education in general, but are for that very reason more sustained and energetic.

We have now progressed in our ideas in regard to Indian Education in general so far as to believe that western systems have their value only to the extent they fit with the conditions of the country. The primary aim of all education is adjustment—the adjustment of the community to its needs and requirements by an appropriate and balanced development of its capacities. No education can be said to be satisfactory which makes for dislocation, and no where is this more true than in agricultural education. I am afraid we have not recognised sufficiently the conditions which agricultural education has to meet in this country. We have failed to take note of the fact that agricultural education was started and developed in western countries under the influence of capitalistic farming induced by high prices. In most of these countries, industrial progress has been, in speed, direction and volume, much

greater than agricultural progress. In the countries of the New World and European colonies else-where, the abundance of virgin land has made for capitalistic farming and all that it implies of the application of science to agriculture. These facts had, and still have, important consequences. Industrial progress makes for the accumulation of capital and capital seeks investment. Where the investment is on land, the holdings have to be of large size, and the aid of science has to be sought for adequate return. The men that take to capitalistic farming have to be thoroughly trained in the science of agriculture, to make it a financial success. They are not, usually, men brought up in rural areas and are, therefore, not familiar with agricultural practices and conditions. This is even more true of the countries of the New World and the colonies, where the men who seek an agricultural career are absolutely new to the profession and, therefore, have to seek education in that subject in a school or college. The systems of higher agricultural education have been developed and perfected in the West to meet the needs of these men.

None of these conditions exist in India. We have to do here with an enormous population, deriving for the most part, its subsistence from land, which is rapidly proving inadequate to meet the needs. An average size of four acres for a holding does not hold out much prospect of capitalistic farming. Our industries have not been sufficiently developed, nor is it going to develop soon enough, for the accumulation of capital and for capital to seek investment in land. The mutual interaction between industry and agriculture, which is so beneficial to both and therefore to the community, resulting in a general rise in the standard of living, of efficiency, intelligence and enterprise, will take many a long year to come. Whereas, in the West, urban standards tend to raise rural standards, in India rural standards tend to depress urban standards; nor, even if we suppose, for a moment, that capitalistic farming will spread in India, is such a prospect to be

welcomed, except in special tracts and in the case of special crops. We cannot face with equanimity the prospect of a landless proletariat in an over-crowded country with hardly any out-let for her surplus population. Their presence has been a serious danger even in countries, far less crowded, of the West with limitless opportunities they had in their foreign possessions. Nor again, under the laws of inheritance prevailing in India, have large properties, brought up to the requirements of capitalistic farming, any chance of resisting the forces of division and disintegration.

These are obstacles to capitalistic farming in India, which will long remain insuperable, and yet until recently effort was directed towards the education of men for capitalistic farming. The graduates of the Agricultural Colleges in India, drawn perhaps from classes with agricultural incomes, have failed to develop agricultural leanings. The migration city-ward is a distressing phenomenon, even in the West, where conditions of small townships and villages approximate fairly closely to those of larger centres of population. Yet in India, where these conditions diverge so widely, that very few of the services—medical, sanitary and educational, to which English educated men are accustomed, are available in the village, we have not yet ceased to expect agricultural graduates to settle down to farming in villages remote from these services and with little opportunity for developing the intellectual and social interests they have acquired.

The experience of the past two decades of agricultural graduates, seeking in increasing numbers to preach scientific agriculture through the departments instead of practising it on their own farms, has convinced us that this type of agricultural education does not meet the actual situation in the country. We are now experimenting with middle schools, and several types are under trial. Even here, we have not grasped fully some of the essential features of the agricultural population, for

whose benefit the education is intended. We have not made sufficient allowance, in our schemes and syllabuses, for the accumulation of experience through forty centuries of agriculture, the essential rural atmosphere from which students are or have to be drawn, the apprenticeship they have had under their fathers and their inherited aptitude for farming. The ryots and their children know the value of good seeds, good manures, of good cultivation, of the conservation of moisture and of rotation. What he does not know are the resources which the latest developments in science place at his disposal. He does not know of the value of the improved implements of new types, and strains of seeds produced which increase yields and resist diseases, of the methods of combating pests and diseases, and of artificial manures. Where experience is already there which has stood scientific scrutiny—and in regard to many an item of agricultural operation such experience undoubtedly exists—we should not have spent time in traversing the ground over again, except so far as to interpret that experience in the light of science. And last but not least, we have not taken into account the fact that education should be designed, not so much to help individual investigation and judgment, as to create confidence in the work and in the recommendations of the Department. With agricultural departments in all the provinces rapidly developing in strength, the ryots have, ready for the asking, expert advice in agricultural matters and there is no need to give an elaborate course modelled on those given in Western countries, where men and land are alike new to agriculture.

These considerations point, to my mind, to the wisdom of confining agricultural education to those aspects of which the ryots are now ignorant and to those other subjects equally necessary to bring ryots into better harmony with their environment. Such a course should be far more practical than theoretical and be covered in about a year. It is best given on a seed farm, where seeds required for the locality are grown for distribution. The

farm should be run on business lines and worked at a profit, the profit going towards the expenses of board and lodging of the students. The pay of the manager and of a teaching assistant should alone, as a rule, be met by the Government. The farm should not be hampered by official routine but should bring the ryots and the Department into touch with one another. The students should ordinarily have had middle school education and be between 15 and 20 and capable of doing all the work on the farm. The after-noons should be devoted to simple lessons in the various subjects, or to inspection of crops in the locality grown under ordinary conditions. It is not necessary to go into greater details to enable you to form an idea of the course I have in mind, but there are some subjects which deserve mention. Among them are rural sanitation and hygiene, co-operation in credit, marketing and purchase, conservation of forests, methods of land survey, assessment and rules regarding revenue collection. No elaborate education in these is suggested, but it is expected that students should know these to help them, as much to understand and observe Government rules in regard to these, as to avoid being victimised by petty officials.

In advocating a simple and short course of this description, I am by no means suggesting that higher education should no longer be given. The very highest standard is necessary for those required to man the agricultural departments, but the number of colleges where this higher training is given should be limited to two—one for the north of India and the other for the south. In these two colleges, there should be training in administration as well. For those who fail to qualify for entry into Government services, facilities should be provided which should induce them to settle down to farming.

But the main effort, and much the larger proportion of funds, should be directed to the establishment of one year courses

designed to train up students drawn from among the class of small farmers, the labouring ryots, from whom comes the bulk of our agricultural production. They contribute, in proportion to their slender resources, more revenue than other classes. It is their money that goes so largely to the support of every branch of Indian education, and equity as well as policy demands that the major portion of the funds available for the agricultural education should be spent for their benefit, to make them more receptive of the scientific ideas which agricultural departments set in circulation, and not diverted to futile and impractical efforts of encouraging capitalistic farming for which opportunity hardly exists in India. An education on these lines, the best adapted, as I believe, to the needs and requirements of the bulk of our agricultural population, should prove immensely attractive and should help them to resist better the forces against which they are now powerless, and thereby speed up agricultural production to the level of the pressing requirements of the country.

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### Discussion.

*Mr. Govinda Kidavu*—remarked, with reference to Vernacular Agricultural Education, that his experience with the Taliparamba Middle School, so far made him doubt whether it would attract students from the class of ryots. In fact he found it difficult to attract students at all.

*Mr. Vellingiri Goundar*—observed that students that had passed out from Agricultural Colleges or schools should be given facilities for starting practical farming.

*Rao Sahib C. S. Ratnasabhapathi Mudaliar* said that he considered that teachers in Elementary schools should possess Agricultural training.

*Mr. G. Rajagopal Nayudu* said that he was not in agreement with the sweeping remarks made by the writer of the paper

to the effect that capitalistic farming would not suit India. He, on the other hand, would maintain that there were numerous hereditary landed proprietors of the class of Zamindars, Pattadars etc., who had good scope for capitalistic farming. The size of the holdings differed under different conditions, for instance, in China, he observed, the largest land-owner did not possess more than 20 acres.

*Rao Sahib M. R. Ramaswami Sivan*—said that he also believed that there was scope for capitalistic farming in India and cited the instance of Rai Bahadur Ganga Ram of the Punjab who had taken up capitalistic farming after retiring from Service. With reference to the case of students passed out of Agricultural Colleges he said he thought some provision for help from the state should be made for the starting of private farming; and appealed to the President—in his capacity as Development Minister—to bring in an act providing State Aid to Agriculture, much in the same way as he had introduced the State Aid to Industries Act.

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**Earning joy.** Happiness must be tricked. She loves to see men at work. She loves sweat, weariness, self-sacrifice. She will be found not in palaces, but lurking in cornfields and factories, or hovering over littered desks; she crowns the unconscious head of the busy child. If you look up suddenly from hard work you will see her, but if you look too long she fades sorrowfully away.

Human happiness is the true order of growth, the sweet exhalation of work, and the seed of human immortality born secretly within the coarse and mortal husk. So many of us crave the odour without cultivating the early growth from which it proceeds; so many wasting mortality expect immortality!

David Grayson. [Great Thoughts, Jan. 1923].

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