

A Scheme of Rural Education and Reconstruction.

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The villagers are mostly farmers of insufficient means. Before starting any work to improve the lot of the farmer one has to study the essential points of his psychology. Every one will admit that any scheme of work meant to improve the farmer must remain attractive to him. It must be attractive almost at the very outset. It is also true that nothing except an immediate money profit will serve to be the most attractive feature of any scheme. He is not sufficiently patient to wait long to obtain it; nor is he always cultured enough to study a situation so thoroughly as to satisfy himself that he has to hold on, spending something upon it, so as to reap increased profits later. He is not also prepared to leave his village for even a couple of days to study profitable ways from elsewhere and to adopt them. He is almost always working under the firm belief that his ways are the best and people coming from elsewhere can therefore render him little help in his own line of work, except when the new-comer is prepared to give him a loan to finance his own cultivation in his own ways. He is also of very strong opinion that any change in his farming methods will bring him loss. He is fatalistic enough, to believe that any loss sustained in his usual business is almost always due to bad season. He is seldom able to assimilate theories and even facts lectured to him or published in leaflets. Therefore the scheme of work with him must necessarily be one in the field in his own village bringing him increased profits in his own rupees annas and pies. Any profits made in a Government Farm run at Government expense or in a farm of a rich land-owner do seldom serve to appeal to his senses as realities.

With these points in view and a guarantee of funds for what may appear to him a risk even in fair seasons, it is possible to start work with one or more farmers in any locality. When increased profits are proved to him in his own lands under his own control by following the advice of an agricultural expert, many a farmer is made a faithful adherent and admirer of the agriculturist whom he begins to follow as a useful guide in all his affairs.

Therefore the question resolves into one of evolving a scheme of work in the field in collaboration with a typical average farmer of popularity in a village. The first consideration for such a scheme is to find out the essential factors which increase the profits of a farm. To be brief I shall put them as:—(1) Efficient and complete use of labour, (2) Selection of profitable crops and live-stock; (3) proper use of cropping practices and proper care of live-stock, (4) knowledge of the cost of production and selling prices showing a margin of profit always, (5) turning all the by-products into money and (6) preventing all lines of waste of time, labour, capital and land.

With these profit factors in view the Agriculturist has to consider which all of them can be adopted in the particular case he has to deal with. The individual farmer with whom the agriculturist has to collaborate and the piece of land in which he undertakes to prove the efficacy of the improved methods to bring in better profits, must be both selected in a suitable locality with great care. A farmer so selected must adopt all improvements for any loss. The agriculturist must also dictate improvements gradually so that a thorough reorganisation of labour and cropping arrangement of the farmer has not to be at once effected. Probably in a few cases the farmer will have to be financed for all the additional expenditure, if any, involved on account of the new method followed. Some common good funds of a co-operative society or the state will have to finance these things to commence with and the agricultural expert will have to supervise the progress of work in every detail. He must be sure to bring about a higher net profit. Any extra expenditure must be deducted from the profits and the net amount should go to the farmer who must have made use of his labour and cattle on this land as on his other areas under cultivation.

If one or two farmers have been for one year made to carry on the work with annual crops meant to produce quick results under the strict supervision of the agricultural expert the profits they must make will certainly be the subject of frequent talk among the villagers. As a consequence more farmers are sure to come forward and

volunteer to adopt such new ideas in their farming without any guarantee of funds to compensate losses. Thus, beforehand an association of farmers adopting new methods can be formed under the guidance of the expert.

Once it becomes possible to form an association of this type for which the necessity arose from within the village, it happens to be a strong centre of work because the membership thereof could be claimed by people who secured faith in the practical aspect of improvements. They will always remain more agreeable to adopt new ideas. Thus an organisation of the type can be made to serve more purposes than the one originally outlined and work without a local organisation is not effective and lasting. Therefore it becomes in reality a co-operative society of farmers run under the guidance of the agricultural expert. Thus it can with little of conflicting interests work as an unlimited liability society to finance the members for their farming and other requirements. It can serve as the most effective centre to impart useful knowledge about anything the villagers require. This should be the end and aim of all rural educational institutions. Thus a strong desire to read and understand things will gradually and automatically be created in the mind of the villager and he will be glad to attend night-schools himself and to send his children to day-schools. Village reading rooms and libraries will soon rise up as side activities of such farmers associations. Their outlook will be widened as they begin to communicate with one another and a central association which they will find it necessary to form sooner than any can imagine. Therefore through the intervention of the agricultural expert who becomes the central figure of any such association all items of work like adult education, rural education, village sanitation, veterinary and health works, etc. can be introduced into a village with greater ease. At present many of the new ideas become as it were an infliction upon the villager who, generally, is at a loss to see how they are so essential to his well-being.

In America also such organisations were started by the agricultural extension service with success. The work of the independent departments of co-operation, education,

veterinary, etc. were combined with this agricultural extension service work to be the sole agency to deal with the rural problems. To quote the words of Mrs. Howard the President of the Agricultural Section of the Science Congress this year, "If the cultivator is to be made a willing partner in the new scheme he will have to be handled from the outset by men who are in sympathy with him, who understand his point of view, who speak his language, wear his dress and who can live in his village." The present agricultural expert (the Agricultural Demonstrator) is therefore the one man who fits in properly as the rural worker to start such associations and work such schemes. He can later on train village school-masters and educate energetic members of the associations to carry on the increasing work of each association serving it as a Secretary. If the worker happens to be a village school-master he is sure to give a good rural development bias to the system of education to the young. The agricultural expert can himself assist such work in a few suitable schools. The workers might be given a small honorarium from State aid to commence with, and later from the funds of the associations.
