

## THE INDIAN SUGAR PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

An abstract of Sir Subrahmanya Aiyar's Lecture for 1930  
delivered under the auspices of the Madras University

BY

RAO BAHADUR T. S. VENKATRAMAN,  
*Government (of India) Sugarcane Expert.*

Looking at the surface of things one would wonder if at present there exists any problem associated with our sugar needs. On the other hand, the price of sugar has been going down sometime back and the world is faced with an over-production of this commodity, which recently caused a reference to the League of Nations. The real problem however presents itself when one realises the dependence of India on other countries for the bulk of the supply of this essential article of food. To-day India is dependent upon the outside world for more than 85 per cent. of her needs in sugar, costing sixteen crores of rupees.

Bad as the present position is, the future outlook is, if anything, worse. Now the bulk of India's needs of sugar and sugar products, viz., 75 per cent., is met by the indigenous *gur* or jaggery, which commodity had been enjoying a certain amount of protection in the religious sentiment of the people against the white sugar, in the manufacture of which bone-char was believed to be used. This sentiment is gradually wearing out. Secondly, the *per capita* consumption in India is much less than in America, Germany or England—less than a fourth in some cases; and it is safe to assume that in the near future our people are likely to go in for more sugar in their diet. The above two causes are likely to steadily increase our needs of white sugar in the future.

In considering our present dependence on the outside world for sugar there are two facts which are of importance. One is that we have in India nearly half the sugarcane area of the world and therefore an area greater than any other single country. The second is that it would appear very likely that India was the original home of the sugarcane and spread to other countries from us.

The reason for the anomalous situation of India in the sugar world is her low acre yields in sugar which are in certain cases less than a fifth of what they are in the other countries of the world. The low yields result from two causes, viz. (1) the poor class of canes grown over the bulk of the Indian sugarcane area and (2) the wasteful methods of manufacture.

In 1912 the Government of India started at Coimbatore a Sugarcane Breeding Station for improving the quality of the kinds of cane grown. The canes produced at this station and now spreading rapidly in North India have proved real improvements, the yields in certain cases being more than double that of the indigenous varieties. It can now be assumed that, in course of time, canes would be available in India of a quality comparable to those in the other parts of the world.

But an increase in acre yields alone resulting from improved canes and better cultivation methods would not solve the problem. At present there is considerable waste in the primitive indigenous methods of manufacture which are inefficient. It has been computed that, if the existing canes were all worked up in up-to-date factories, the whole of the supply of white sugar could easily be found within the country. It is significant that India with its about two and three quarter million acres under cane has only a little over 30 factories and refineries against the 170 factories in Java for a sixth of the Indian area.

The solution of the Indian problem lies therefore firstly, in the increasing of the acre yields through the adoption of better varieties and better cultivation methods and the starting of a large number of up-to-date sugar factories in suitable places for the working up of the canes into sugar in an economical manner.

### 'Live that you may learn'

"People are always thinking of education as a means of livelihood. Education is not a profitable business but a costly one; even the best attainments of it are always unprofitable in any terms of coin. No nation ever made its bread either by its great arts or by its great wisdoms. By its minor arts and manufactures, by its practical knowledges, yes. But its noble scholarship, its noble philosophy, and its noble arts are always to be bought as a treasure, not sold as a livelihood. *You do not learn that you may live, you live that you may learn.*"—RUSKIN.

From the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, March 21, 1930.

## College Day and Conference 1930

The 20th College Day and Conference will be held this year from July 15th to 18th. G. R. Hilson Esq., Director of Agriculture, Madras has kindly consented to preside over the Conference.

The following is the tentative programme:

<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>15th July.</i>	Sports. M.A.S.U. 'At Home.'
<i>Wed.</i>	<i>16th</i> ,,	Exhibition.
<i>Thursday</i>	<i>17th</i> ,,	Forenoon.—Exhibition. Afternoon.—Union General body Meeting.
<i>Friday</i>	<i>18th</i> ,,	12 noon to 4 p.m. Conference.