

**Statement of Wool Yield**

Year	Maximum	Average
	lbs. oz.	lbs. oz.
1924	...	1 5½
1925	...	1 9½
1926	2 12	2 0
1927	3 8	1 15
1928	5 3	2 4
1929	7 2	2 6
1930	7 8	2 5

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**RURAL RECONSTRUCTION**

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Actuaricians have it that 90 per cent of the Indian people live in rural areas while only 10 per cent of it constitute the 'Intelligentsia.' India is predominantly an agricultural country and the majority of the people must remain agriculturists. The efforts of both the social ameliorist and the political worker need to be concentrated as the *Times* says 'upon promoting an enquiry which concerns the welfare of over four-fifths of the three-hundred and twenty millions of people who inhabit India.' The rural world has need of fundamental change if it is to be saved from decay—change both in its 'economic structure' and in its 'philosophy of life.'

On a careful analysis of the rural conditions it will be found that the question resolves itself into two broad issues, viz., (1) economic, (2) cultural. The attention of the public workers or of any humanitarian leagues should first be converged upon these two aspects, for it is only on the improvement of their distressing economic situation and on the change in their outlook to raise the standard of living that the condition of this vast multitude can be made more enviable. It is only by such progress of evolution that the country can make more rapid strides on the path of progress and contribute more substantially for its constitutional and economic history.

The produce of land being the principal means of subsistence for the masses, it becomes obvious that the return which the agriculturists get for their labour all the year round is a very important question. In fact the system of land tenure affords the key to their economic prosperity. Greater security of tenure and fixation of rents on more equitable basis would give greater incentive to cultivators to improve their land. A great percentage of ryots are tenant-cultivators and unless the landholders are moderate in their demands for rent, the poor cultivators will be led to ruin due to unequal conflict and the lands being excessively infeudated become indifferently cultivated eventually leading to non-payment of rents, and the consequent trouble of civil courts. When village Panchayats become the universal feature of villages such matters may fitly be left for their decision. The great drawback of Indian agriculture is that it does not pursue scientific methods of agriculture. Agricultural development, if development it is, has more or less

been from a long time on empirical lines and it is no uncommon sight to see a vast congregation of cultivators sitting in dull despair of the delaying monsoon or of the pests committing havoc which they could have easily avoided with a careful selection of seeds. The department of agriculture brought into being by a benign government is finding it an uphill task to break through the impervious ignorance of the masses. Customs and conventions die hard in India and instances are not wanting to show that the use of Copper Sulphate for purifying cholam seeds has been considered heretical. The use of improved ploughs, selection of seeds, production of natural resources for maximum benefit, easy and intelligent methods of transport are a few among the immediate changes to be introduced in the agricultural system of the country, and it is no small wonder that the hesitant cultivator looks on these innovations in the time honoured system with distrust and suspicion. It becomes therefore increasingly obvious that such instructions should be incorporated in the school curriculum and the children made to imbibe the ideas with a fairness of mind. This apart, provision of a larger number of model farms and agricultural demonstrators should be made, agricultural loans act liberalised, and improvements effected from time to time, brought home to the masses through intensive propaganda. The Indian cultivator is a most conservative being and does not believe in anything which he does not see with his naked eyes. Cottage industry is another important economic factor which demands urgent resuscitation of its working conditions. Weaving, spinning, carpentry, smithy and to a certain extent shoe-making form the staple industry of the people in rural areas. A study of their methods of work reveals the deplorable fact that no attention is paid to conserving time and energy. The products manufactured under such conditions are placed in the market for sale at unconscionable rate with the result that in the end the cheaper stuff gets the better sale, while they get weather-beaten and ultimately undersold. This improvident attitude which has become a second nature with a village worker has been a serious handicap making him stumble every time he pops his head. Even in these professions the villager suffers mainly through lack of knowledge and absence of proper financial backing. The State Aid to Industries bill which was chiefly intended to advance such rural activities seems to be functioning very little in these directions. Sufficient financial aid should be forthcoming to revive these industries and to make them a more paying concern. Peripatetic weaving parties should be brought into existence in greater numbers, so that they might actually live amidst the ryots for some time demonstrating the advantages of improved looms and other auxiliary developments of modern weaving. Likewise carpentry, smithy and shoe-making may be made more paying through suitable executive agencies for bringing them into conformity with modern requirements. In the village republic these professions form important units, and it is well they are kept intact on their jobs in a manner to make them live better and work better.

Yet another factor which goes a long way in the life of rural areas is domestic gardening. For want of a better knowledge of Botany this piece of manual work has not become as efficient as it should be. It was Lala Lajpat Rai who laid insistence on this work in villages as next only to spinning. This is a kind of recreation to a student of nature and a pleasant occupation to the old and the young. No great effort is needed in this direction. One can take to this as a kind of hobby in his leisure hours. A family may subsist on its produce without difficulty and with some more effort it may be made a paying concern also. Large extent of land is lying fallow through the ignor-

ance of the villagers to harness the available resources for putting up a fine garden. The fine topes of the west coast are therefore a special feature of South India and would it not be a beauty spot if all the available land is converted into a vast expanse of green verdure? 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' and this the unsophisticated villager must be made conscious of. It is, therefore, a consideration of the above points that forms the crux of rural economics and every well-meaning citizen should place these in the forefront of his civic programme.

Having discussed the most important aspect of rural development, we now turn to a consideration of its cultural aspect. It is in directing our energies to rehabilitate worn-out social customs, we must guard ourselves against excessive zeal, or putting a *volte-face* or attempting to do anything *per-saltum*. It is often adjudged that the causes of our present poverty are mainly to be found in our inexorable social customs and not till caste usages are rendered more and more elastic will greater movement of labour be possible. Primary education is the only solvent of these difficulties and it should be overhauled with a view to adapt it to the crying needs of village life so that the peasant might successfully tackle problems of village hygiene, to co-operate more fully with his fellows, and take a rightful share in the civic responsibilities of the village. Besides the 3 R's, special instruction in Agriculture, Civics and Hygiene are a *sine qua non* of a sound system of rural education. It is in the schoolroom that the future citizen would imbibe ideas of better living and go forth to the world carrying this torch of knowledge to emancipate their less-tutored brethren from the thralldom of ignorance.

Education of this sort must be made universal and compulsory and must be carried, if need be, to the very door of the people. The Department of Public Health may go hand in hand with the Department of Education instilling ideas about 'plain living and high thinking' with greater advantage in the minds of the peasants. It is almost a truism to say that the villager generally takes after his neighbour, and would it not produce a salutary effect if model cottages and cattle sheds are constructed by the Health Department so that the conservative villager might shake off his prejudice and take to them more freely? Proper conservancy, providing facilities for good and abundant drinkable water, creating better ideas of light and air, are some of the important measures whose materialisation would accelerate the work of the reformer and enliven the monotonous life of the poor peasant. Private enterprise is foreign to their nature and if the State does not initiate and set the necessary example hopes of redemption are none.

One more point which needs mention *en passant* is the instruction of seasonal lectures and cinema shows. This is no doubt a costly affair but modest beginnings might be made in this direction. America sets the brightest example of propaganda work and her present high level of prosperity is in no small measure due to the daring, enterprising spirit and general literacy of the people. Rural libraries containing a choice selection of books suitable to the peasant folk are a desideratum and the village teacher who commands more leisure may be entrusted with their maintenance. Books on plants, animals, agriculture, vegetable gardening, Geography, Geology, Physiography, and civic administration and citizenship are of the utmost value to a community whose sole occupation is husbandry, while engendering in them correct notions of their environment. They must be made to supplement their agricultural income by some useful occupation so that they may earn a more assured and decent livelihood and become efficient and useful



citizens. Night Schools for adults and working men's institutes give good opportunities to combat ignorance amongst the masses. Under their auspices Agricultural and Medical Officers should go about as peripatetic teachers giving lectures illustrated by lantern slides, projecting lantern and stereoscopic displays on useful topics pertaining to Agriculture, Sanitation and Geography.

With the education of adults, the question of primary education is easily solved and the chances for children to take to education more unreservedly will be proportionately greater.

## A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF BLACK SOIL PLANTS

By P. S. JIVANNA RAO, M.A.

*Introduction*—Black soil also known as regur or regada covers a total area of 200,000 square miles of the Indian soil and the great bulk of the cotton crop in India is grown on it. Of this area about three million acres are within the Presidency of Madras and belong to the districts of Bellary, Cuddapah, Kurnool and Anantapur forming the Ceded or Deccan districts and portions of Guntur, Salem, Trichinopoly, Ramnad and Tinnevely districts.

The cause of the black colour and the nature of the constituents, both physical and chemical, of this soil formed the subject of special investigation by Leather (1898), Annett (1910) and Harrison (1912) who have expressed divergent views on the matter.

The characteristic features of the soil are : it consists of black clay friable when dry, sticky and adhesive when wet and cracking deeply in hot weather. It varies in depth and fertility from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 feet in Coimbatore and 5 to 10 feet or more in parts of Bellary and Kurnool districts being underlain in one case by kankar and by beds of red earth in the other. Retention of moisture is its most valuable property which varies according to texture and depth. Though the soil is derived from diverse formations, it possesses common characteristics which go to support an interesting type of vegetation consisting more of herbs and shrubs than trees. In addition to cotton several other crops are raised on it, namely, sorghum, tenai and cumbu among grasses, bengal gram, groundnut, red gram, black gram and indigo among the legumes, tobacco and chilli, onion, safflower, gingelly, castor, linseed, mustard, cummin, coriander etc.

*Flora*—By reason of its cracking during dry weather which injures the root system the soil is ill fitted for tree vegetation in general and this gives the appearance of barrenness to extensive tracts of land which are otherwise fertile. The tree flora is thus very limited and consists of a few species like *Acacia arabica*, *Balanites Roxburghii*, *Butea frondosa*, *Dichrostachys cinerea* and *Zizyphus Jujuba*. The *Nim* (*Azadirachta indica*) and the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) are planted in avenues and among shrubs may be noticed *Calotropis gigantea*, *Cassia auriculata* and *Opuntia Dillenii*. The half shrubs and herbs, however, are a much larger number of which the more characteristic are : *Alysicarpus rugosus*, *Aristolochia bracteata*, *Chrozophora plicata*, *Hibiscus ficulneus*, *Ischaemum pilosum*, *Jatropha glandulifera*, *Momordica tuberosa*, *Panicum Isachne*, *Phyllanthus maderaspatensis* and *Withania somnifera*.