

YOUTH AND RURAL UPLIFT—A CALL FROM ONE OF THEM

By M. J. DAVID,
Student B.Sc., (III).

It is amazing when we begin to think how many of us wander through the vale of life without any particular end in view. We are born, we grow, we act our various parts, and are ultimately consigned to oblivion, without having had any great accomplishment to our credit. We do not realize until we give a thought to it, how much we are slaves to circumstances and how little we try to rise above them so as to look at things from a wider perspective. If we study the lives of world's great men and compare them with ours we will realize what life led by those great men signifies. We will find, that a life lived strenuously for a mighty purpose, is as different from a purposeless life, as light is from darkness. We find in the lives of great men a passion dominating all their activities. It is their singleness of purpose and perseverance that helped them to achieve their goal.

We must follow the footsteps of great men, rise like them to the demand of the times, and lead a useful life rather than an easy indolent one. The duty of building a greater India rests with us. The older men represent mostly spent up forces. They may serve to direct the energies of youth but are unfit for the task themselves. Youth is the period of ardour, enthusiasm, energy, warmth of heart and generosity. The future of the nation depends on how the great potentialities of its youth are nurtured and developed. We must train ourselves by rigid self-discipline, strength of will and conscientious work to direct our abundant energies into useful channels. Sir Henry Bellingham says 'The whirl, excitement and the nervous tension of the life of to-day tend to make men selfish, and exacting, and to teach the young to be impatient of all restraints and to look for incessant amusement that must eventually destroy the moral faculty.' We shall not give cause to such a complaint. Remember that we have duties to perform to blot out the tarnishes on the bright shield of India's honour, to uphold her honour among the nations of the world and to restore her to her pristine glory. We, the young men of to-day, are the citizens of to-morrow, the leaders of future India who will direct the destinies of the motherland. So if we want a better India, an India which is socially and economically better than she now is, we must build ourselves up, we must develop a good physique, build up a hygienic conscience, and free ourselves from social prejudices. Youth is said to be reckless, daring, enthusiastic, free from the burdens of life, free from care of the future, and indifferent to obstacles, if it has a mind to accomplish a set purpose. The present age is pre-eminently the age of youth. All great national regenerations of the present day are due to the revolt of youth. When young men all over the world are forming themselves into organizations with a set purpose of reforming themselves and society, why should we in India keep quiet?

Why has India come to this fallen state? It is because the educated men left all industries and agriculture in the hands of their poorer brethren. They have been selfish. They have not cared for the welfare of their own countrymen, the poverty stricken, starving masses of India,

who represent the real India. They have not realized and do not realize that they are born into a world which they can do much to improve, that there are millions of their countrymen who live in poverty, whose condition can be ameliorated if only they, the richer middle classes, try to do something for them.

The millions of India live amidst filth and dirt. The Indian ryot, though he has got a high sense of personal cleanliness, has very little sense of public cleanliness or what may be called public hygienic conscience. He does not realize that drinking water is a source of very many diseases and does not take care to boil it or get pure water. He leads a hygienically miserable life and dies a premature death. This is the condition of the untouchables. Is it not shameful for the nation as a whole to put aside $\frac{1}{4}$ th of its population as untouchables? Who is to rescue them from such a state of degradation and poverty? Certainly, it is the educated men, the so-called higher classes who ought to do it. But the older generation will not do it as it has sunk so deep in the mire of caste prejudice and has not the courage to tear itself away from a tyrannical tradition for working for the uplift of a section of humanity. So, we, young men, who have not drunk so deep the poison of caste prejudice should do it. Why then, don't we do it? It is not due to loss of sympathy for them but it is due to indifference. Let us shake off that indifference and be up and doing. Let us join together into associations in all parts of our country, wherever four or five of us can meet, meet often, discuss ways and means and carry out effectively a campaign against rural insanitation, social inequalities and illiteracy: Let us try to start Co-operative Societies, Agricultural Associations, encourage cottage industries and by extensive propaganda popularize the products of these industries amongst the higher classes. Let us learn and then teach others to maintain sanitary conditions in their stables and farm yards, in the preparation of ghee, in the handling of milk and other similar products. Let us avail ourselves of the help that Rural Reconstruction Societies or centres like those of the Y.M.C.A. can give us and co-operate with them and popularize such industries as apiculture and poultry-keeping. Let us also avail ourselves of the help that the Labour and Health Departments can give us and help them in spreading public hygienic conscience amongst the people. We, the students of the Agricultural College, in particular, have a splendid opportunity before us to help our country in this matter. Our work lies amidst people who live in the villages and by the training we receive in the Institution we are specially equipped to undertake work connected with rural uplift. If we do this the day will not be far off when we will have a new India, an India teeming with life and activity, an India free from social inequalities and economic distress.

We are now in the transitional stage in the political, economical and social field. Established traditions and customs are in the melting pot. This is the time for us, young men, to wake up from our long slumber and play our part in the social and economic regeneration of our country and bring her to the forefront among the nations of the world. Let it not be said that the Indian youth lagged behind when youths of other nations organized themselves and reformed societies and nations. Let us co-operate, organize ourselves into societies and leagues and work for the uplift and regeneration of rural India. May God make us realize our responsibilities, our duty to our country and help us to fulfil them,