

## SOME OF MY REMINISCENCES

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### I. The Madras Agricultural Students' Union.

It was nearly 50 years ago,—to be more exact, in August 1889—that I got admission as a student in the College of Agriculture at Saidapet, and, after several years' work as Clerk, Farm Bailiff and Lecturer in that institution, I had the privilege of being one of the staff to be drafted into the Agricultural College and Research Institute at Coimbatore as Chief Assistant to the Government Agricultural Chemist in 1908 and retired, in May 1927, after nearly 20 years, as Government Lecturing Chemist and as Principal. Starting from the lowest rung of the ladder as Second Clerk and Assistant Farm Bailiff on Rs. 20 at Saidapet, it was my good fortune to be promoted to the Indian Agricultural Service and to reach the top of the ladder as permanent Principal of the Institution at Coimbatore, before I retired from service and to watch and often take part in, all the stages of development and vicissitudes, through which Agricultural Education and Agricultural Research had to pass during the last half a century; and I thought it desirable that I should give expression to some of my impressions and experiences while these are still fresh in my mind, with a view to creating some interest in the young men of to-day, towards the old order of things.

In writing these reminiscences, I do not propose to write a connected history of the Saidapet College or the Coimbatore institution, as I think that such an account has already been compiled or can be easily gathered from past Official Records and Annual Reports and may also probably be boring to the reader. What I propose to do is, to take up a particular subject, irrespective of chronological order, and say whatever may appeal to me as interesting with regard to that particular subject and, wherever possible, offer suggestions for further improvements in that particular direction.

There are three subjects with regard to the Agricultural College at Coimbatore with which I have been intimately connected from their inception, namely, *the Madras Agricultural Students' Union, the Agricultural College Officers' Club and University representation*; and these will be dealt separately.

**The Madras Agricultural Students' Union:** When the Madras College of Agriculture at Saidapet was ordered to be closed and the Agricultural College and Research Institute was started at Coimbatore, some of the *alumni* of the Saidapet College who were posted to work at Coimbatore realised that the institution at Coimbatore was but a continuation of the older one, with the advantage that



Coimbatore possessed a greater variety of soils and crops than Saidapet, admitting of different aspects of farming, and also provided special facilities for Research which did not exist at Saidapet. There was a desire amongst some of us that the contact between Saidapet and Coimbatore should be firm and enduring, and the Madras Agricultural Students' Union was born in one of the hostel rooms, myself having been the Hostel Warden at the time. The late Mr. S. L. D'Silva was our Guru and Chief Adviser and was our first Vice-president, the Principal of the College being always ex-officio President. Messrs. J. Chelvaranga Raju, T. V. Rajagopalachari, and K. Krishnamurthy Rao were some of the first members of the Committee. I had the honour of being elected the first General Secretary and Editor of the M. A. S. U. Journal and I had the good fortune of having Mr. K. T. Alwa as my student associate. We had a lot of controversy at the time about the naming of the new organisation; and we decided that it should be designated "the Madras Agricultural Students' Union" for a number of reasons. It was called the Madras Union because it had to include the old students of the Saidapet College and the old and new students of Coimbatore and also those residing all over the Presidency. It was called the Students' Union because it was to be an organisation between the old students of Saidapet and the old and present students of Coimbatore. The Union was formed in the year 1909 with the following objects:

- (a) To encourage an *esprit de corps* among its members;
- (b) To protect and promote the interests of its members;
- (c) To act as an employment bureau for members;
- (d) To exchange opinions and experiences in matters agricultural and make a record of the same;
- (e) And to disseminate knowledge in agriculture.

Membership was open to the past students of Saidapet and the past and present students of Coimbatore and to officers of the Agricultural Department, whether they were old students or not. In the earlier years, on the plea that the Union was an Old Boys' Association, some of the offices were not open to officer-members who were not Old boys. This restriction was, however, removed as soon as it was realised that there was some friction and unpleasantness; and we are glad to say that all the offices of the Union have since been held by Officer-members who were not Old boys and by Old boys as well. The enormous amount of selfless work done with cheerfulness and enthusiasm by successive Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers, Editors and Managers of the Journal, members of the Council and of the Executive Committee and special Sports and Entertainment Sub-committees deserves a number of separate articles.



For several years, all were Life Members; there were Ordinary Life Members who paid a subscription of Rs. 5 and First-Class Life Members who paid Rs. 10, while Patrons gave a donation of Rs. 100. Student-members paid a Rupee every year during the college course and paid the balance of Life Membership when they left the College, and it was a common practice in those days for old students giving authorisation letters to the General Secretary to receive their caution money from the Principal towards the payment of their Life subscriptions.

The Union started with an Annual in the first year, was conducted as a Quarterly for about three years and has since been a Monthly all along. It was an understanding that every member should purchase a copy of the Journal and even the editor was not exempted from paying the subscription for the Journal, which was then Rs. 2 per annum.

The Journal of Madras Agricultural Students' Union was started as an Old Boys' Magazine and was intended to record personal events and personal experiences rather than functioning as an Agricultural Journal. It was soon felt that the Journal should cater to a wider public as several land-holders came to subscribe for the paper. The work of editing, publishing, and despatching of the Journal was all done by a few enthusiastic members of the staff of the College, assisted by some of the student representatives. There was always an Editorial Committee but the brunt of the work fell on the shoulders of the Editor and on the Manager. Some of the old boys sent contributions based on their practical experience and observation and, when these contributions were always sent officially through the superior officers concerned, it sometimes happened that some of the younger Agricultural Officers were snubbed for wasting time in writing articles. It is to the credit of Madras that the Madras Agricultural Journal, as it is now called, stands ahead of similar journals started in some other Colleges though the Madras Agricultural Journal has never received any financial aid from the Government and although all the work of editing and conducting the journal has been done in an honorary capacity by officers who have to turn out daily their routine work for at least six hours in the field and laboratories.

Apart from the Journal which demands day-to-day attention there have always been Annual functions, no less important. The College Athletic Sports are run by the Union. The College Day Celebrations are arranged for by the Union, and the holding of the Agricultural Conferences which have attracted considerable attention all over the country are also organised under the auspices of the Union.

The Madras Agricultural Students' Union is a unique organisation, has done considerable amount of useful work so far and is capable of doing much more. Hundreds of personal reminiscences flash through my mind and as many suggestions for improvement occur to me. As



this article has however, come to some length, I shall close it with the following queries :—

- Are you eligible to become a member of the M. A. S. U. ?
- Have you already joined the M. A. S. U. ? If not, why not ?
- How can any organisation put forth its best, if all those who are eligible to join it have not done so ?
- Do you witness the College Day Celebrations ?
- Do you see the College Sports ?
- Do you attend the Annual Conferences, if not, why not ?
- If you do, how can you honestly take part in these functions, without being a member of the Union ?
- Do you ever read the Madras Agricultural Journal ?
- Do you subscribe for the Journal ? Do you contribute articles to the journal ? If not, why not ?
- Have you ever been deputed to attend the Annual day and have you not felt a thrill when you meet the alumni of your Alma mater ?
- How can an *Esprit de Corps* be created and maintained, unless all the devotees at the shrine of Agriculture join the Union ?

It is never too late to mend. The inclusive subscription for membership and Journal is so small. Join the Madras Agricultural Students' Union at once.

## II. Representation of Agricultural Education in the University Bodies.

### *An Appeal to Graduates of the Agricultural Department.*

I have had the honour of being your elected representative on the Madras Senate for five terms, on the Academic Council for four terms and on the Syndicate for two terms ; and, although I feel active enough to carry on, I think the time has arrived for me to retire from the above university bodies. Agricultural Education is now represented on the Senate by the Principal, and on the Academic Council by the Principal and two members of the teaching staff elected by themselves. You will all agree with me that this is not sufficient representation for us in the University of Madras and that there is need for us to secure a more adequate representation. A number of points must be constantly borne in mind to ensure success in the elections to the different University Authorities.

As regards the Senate, the election from the Registered Graduates' Constituency is by proportional representation with the *Single Transferable Vote*. The first requisite is that all those, eligible to register—those who have passed any Degree examination of the University of Madras of seven years' standing and who have also taken the Degree in person or in absentia prior to August 1938—should