

METHODS OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION WORK DONE BY THE AMERICAN ARCOT MISSION AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE, KATPADI.

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I take this opportunity of thanking the Madras Agricultural Students' Union for inviting the American Arcot Mission to take part in the lively activities of this conference. Perhaps some of you might have heard of and some have seen the American Arcot Mission Agricultural Institute, Katpadi. It is located about 4 miles away from the main Katapadi—Bangalore road. As one goes along the road winding in and out of the numerous barren knolls which are a feature of the tract, one wonders whether any farm can have its existence in such a place, but the visitor is amply rewarded at the end by the presence of a beautiful farm, demonstrating how best such an inhospitable and barren land can be made to attract and yield. This was made possible entirely due to the pioneer and untiring efforts of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. De Valois who have put their heart and soul into this project. I shall now, go through the past, the present and the future of the Institute.

The Past. The American Arcot Mission has never forgotten the importance of the rural life of India in all its fulness and of the lines of spiritual, mental, physical, social and economical aspects of it. In pursuance of this policy, in 1918 it was decided to fit in the economic aspect, as rural conditions demanded. So, need for work in Agriculture was felt and a plan was presented to the Government and a trained Agricultural hand was also appointed to be in charge. This led the Reformed Church in America to raise \$ 14,900 and to send Mr. and Mrs. J. J. De Valois to India.

The Government offered the Mission 175 acres of land near Katpadi. In 1923 the missionary house was built and occupied. A vigorous programme of work was then carried out, such as digging of wells, laying out plots, bunding and tracing the fields, planting of trees, providing quarters for the staff and building of the school and hostel. The first batch of boys were admitted in 1924. The period from 1923 to 1930 was mainly a pioneering one and gave valuable experience in chalking out for the programme of work.

The Present Activities. *Poultry Raising.* A leading part in the development of the improved poultry farming has been taken in the Presidency. The foundation stock of our pens is a flock of 197 adult birds imported from England and America. Well over a thousand birds are at the farm besides the innumerable ones sent to various

parts of India and outside countries like Burmah, Siam and Arabia. Our aim is to make poultry raising a subsidiary industry enabling the poor villagers to add a little to their income. Almost all the villages round about Katpadi are now having pure and cross bred birds earning a part of their livelihood through the sales of eggs at our Rural Development Egg Marketing Centre at Katpadi.

Cattle Breeding. "Cattle is the back-bone of the farmer in India" but in almost all the villages, the specimens found are such as to evoke one's sympathy. Breeding is haphazard, there being no regular organization. To raise the standard of the milch and draft animals, breeding bulls and buffaloes have been stationed under the Government premium scheme at various places round about our farm for the benefit of the villagers. Apart from the *Scindhi* and *Kangayam* stud bulls stationed at the Farm, the Institute has sent out about a dozen bulls to the villages round about the farm for breeding purposes and as the result every year more than 600 cows are served and at least 500 calves are born to the pure bred sires of both the breeds.

Goat Rearing. There are nearly 11 million goats in the presidency, but they are of non-descriptive variety. Goat's milk though a valuable food is not in general use as an article of food. Goat is "the poor man's cow, in as much as eight milking goats can be kept on the amount of feed that one cow would require."

There are two breeds of goats *Surity* and *Jumnapari*. These pure bred bucks are made to cross with the country goats to grade up the country breed. As the result we have now in the villages and in the farm about 100 cross-bred goats. Many are sold for a higher price than the country ones. Thus the villagers have begun to realise the benefits of goat breeding. The goats have gone not only to many places within the district but also to many other districts. The institute is expecting the final sanction for a scheme of goat breeding from the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi. The Institute with a view to make a quick propagation has lent out about 100 goats on *Varam* system in many of the villages. Associated with this the problem of fodder is tackled and we are using pit and trench silos with success in addition to the cultivation of fodder crops.

Conservation and Use of Manure. Not to speak much about the very low humus content of our land we have to admit the considerable loss of it through ignorance and negligence. Proper preservation of cattle manure by the loose box, dry earth, the manure pit and compost systems and the growing of green manure crops are all regular items of demonstration in our farm.

Improved Implements. Improvements which will meet the desired end and do not involve much expenses to the ryot are being incorporated in the local implements, and labour saving methods of cultivation and irrigation are practised.

Diversified farming. Paddy, the staple crop is produced under the most uneconomical conditions in these tracts. To make the farmer work better, to find him work all round the year and to provide himself and his family a better diet, cultivation of fruits and vegetables is being advocated.

Rural Community, Agricultural bias, middle school. In 1930 this phase of activity was begun at the farm. There is a hostel which provides accommodation for over 70 village boys, and over 80 day-scholars attend the school from the neighbouring villages. Government syllabus is followed allowing them to continue higher studies. Both theoretical and practical courses are given to these boys on dry and wet crops, home and market gardening and animal husbandry. All the students do two hours practical work daily on the farm and are able to raise by their own effort enough vegetables and fruits and also to produce sufficient quantity of milk, eggs and grain. The educational value of such a programme is very striking indeed. After finishing this three-year course, which provides an agricultural bias, some of these boys take teachers' training and become teachers in the villages while others take up cultivation or other work in their own villages, thereby creating a really efficient source for enlightened village life under the "Back to the village" system. Though the farm is located in a secluded spot, the attention of people engaged in rural development has been drawn to it and we get a steady stream of visitors and ryots. Some of them stay for a few days and get thoroughly acquainted with all the activities of the farm, while others exchange ideas of mutual benefit.

Summer School and Short Courses. A 'Summer School' was started in 1929. The villager who found his work slack, was invited to undergo a short course at the farm. Our object was to infuse a desire for a better village life and living. Thus the students of the Summer School were adult men and women teachers, farmers and local leaders. These were given short courses on the scientific methods of cultivation, preservation of manure, poultry raising, and other cottage industries. Entertainments, dramas and *bajanas* were conducted at regular intervals.

Extension work done by the boys and village scouting. In addition to the regular school work, the staff and students of the school have selected three different villages and done some work under the following methods. The school is closed on a Friday morning, the staff and the boys are divided into three groups reach the village by walk and make the necessary preparation for their stay for two days in the village. On Friday evening a variety entertainment is given to the public containing lessons on uplift work. On the following morning the boys all dress in Khaki, go about the village and give practical demonstrations such as conservation of manure by the dry earth

system, digging of manure pits, and cleaning of wells. They go about with spades and crowbars, and repair the street roads. In the evening the boys enact a drama on a subject like health, temperance or uplift work which usually lasts to the dawn of the next day. After doing some more work on Sunday they return to the farm on Sunday night to begin the regular school work on Monday. This is done by the staff, including the principal, their families and all the students. This is done three times in a year. The result is many, of the village people have understood the value of conserving manure and to keep their streets and wells clean.

Rural Development Centre, Katpadi. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays eggs are brought from at least 20 villages and they are tested and graded by electricity and are despatched to different places by rail. Eggs are supplied to different places, hotels, stores, agents and to individual families in different grades and at different rates. To some clients more than 40 dozen eggs are being sent on alternate days and a regular supply of 60 dozen is made twice a week to the Madras Civil Orphan Asylum. By this the poor villagers make a lot of profit and we promise to take all the eggs that they can produce. Cloth is bought in large quantities direct from the mills at Madras and are sold both as cloth and ready-made dress at rates cheaper than the usual bazaar prices. By this the poor villagers are benefited. Fruits and vegetables, such as tomatoes, papayas, guavas and brinjals are brought to the Centre from the villages and are sold to the customers thus helping the marketing of the produce of the villagers. There is a Rural Circulating Library from which many villagers are benefited. The same hall is used as a free reading room which has one English paper, one Tamil paper and a good number of English and American magazines. A family is set apart for the Centre work, the husband being in charge of marketing and the wife in charge of the library and reading room. One of our staff is set apart to supervise the work done in the villages on all these lines at regular intervals. During the past year our Marketing Centre has purchased over 72,000 eggs from the village people paying them over Rs. 2000 for the same. Over 1000 books on various subjects have been circulated and read in the villages through our circulating library.

Work done by the Agricultural Institute under the North Arcot District Economic Council. In accordance with this scheme, work is being done by introducing poultry and stud goats in many of these centres. Exhibits were taken to all these centres during the Village week celebrations, lectures were given during the public meetings under the chairmanship of the respective Revenue divisional officers, strongly emphasizing the methods of poultry raising and its benefits. A special lecture was delivered at the Ryots' Conference held at Vaniyambadi under the presidency of S. A. Venketaraman Esq., I. C. S. the district collector of North Arcot and the president

of the District Economic Council. The Economic Council has sanctioned Rs. 3000 for three years at Rs. 1000 per year. The Institute thanks the Council and its president for the financial help and for the opportunity given to the Institute to do this piece of work for the improvement of the villages.

In addition to the exhibitions held in all the eleven model villages in connection with the village week celebrations under the District Economic Council there were three special exhibitions held during the year.

On the 12th. and the 13th. March 1937 a big exhibition was held at the Rural Development Centre at Katpadi in a specially erected *pandal*. The Animal Show of the S. P. C. A. of Vellore was combined with this exhibition. Many of the Government Departments i. e., Agriculture, Veterinary, Cooperative (button factory, ratan work, shoe making etc.), Fisheries and the Red Cross society took part, bringing their exhibits also. The Assistant Director of Agriculture held the inspection of the breeding bulls and conducted a ploughing competition on the exhibition grounds. There was a great show of poultry, goats, cows, calves, grains, fruits, vegetables etc. and prizes were awarded. Sports and games were conducted. A radio was set up and entertained the public for two days. Public processions were conducted with music with the bulls, goats, fowls etc., through the town. A public meeting was held over which the District Collector presided. The principal gave a report of the work and Miss G. Dodd gave away the prizes which consisted of valuable brass vessels and other useful utensils.

More or less the same programme was followed at the Rural Exhibition at Ponnai Anecut in Walaja Taluk, Ranipet Division on the 19th. and 20th. April 1937 where hundreds of village people camped with their families under thatched sheds. Ploughing competition, sports and games, poultry crops, fruits and vegetables were all exhibited and the usual prizes were given away. On the 22nd. and 23rd. April 1937 the same kind of exhibition was held at Virudampet near Vellore on the banks of the river Palar.

The Future: Goat breeding scheme for the production of a better breed, by crossing *Jumnapari* and *Suriti*, the reputed heavy milk yielders and good meat producers with the local selected stock is an important one and we are attempting to do this work with the help and cooperation of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, for South India in general and with the guidance of the North Arcot District Economic Council for the district in particular.

More intensive work on the above lines and the development of all the present activities with the help of the Development Department are our future plans.

Summary. Statistics are dry reading but may be the best way to sum up accomplishments of the past. We have imported 137 fowls from America and England through the years in order to build up our poultry. We have terraced and bunded 60 acres of land and brought it under cultivation. Where in the beginning we had only palmyra trees with no shade even for a poultry run, to-day we have 1000 mango, 60 guava, 80 papaya, 135 lime, 123 orange, 50 coconut and 300 tamarind trees a total of 1,800 fruit trees, not to mention the thousands of shade, fuel and avenue trees in addition. We have 2000 fowls on the farm; we own 32 cattle and breeding bulls; our herd of goats has grown from 15 does in 1932 to over 100 to-day. Our registers show over 600 services a year by our breeding bulls and we have trained 182 men and women in our Summer schools. We now have a complete Higher Elementary School with 155 boys and girls and a staff of seven well qualified teachers. A total of about 600 boys and girls have attended and passed through our school during the past years. Our finances are met by the Mission funds and from the Government grants and we thank the Government for the support rendered to us.

Conclusion. I wish to conclude this paper with the fervent hope that God may bless this piece of work which is slowly but steadily progressing. It is our earnest hope and prayer that God and man will cooperate in this glorious work and do their part to bring the thousands of villages of our dear mother land of India to a better condition in all its phases of work. Let India attain first the *Swaraj* of rural uplift, freed from the dangerous clutches of drink, dirt, debt and disease.

"Let us be on the alert and be prepared to do our best."

"Let our actions speak louder than our words."

"God helps those that help themselves."

ADULT EDUCATION FOR RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

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After several years of experimentation in rural reconstruction work, we, workers of the Y. M. C. A., came to definite conclusions regarding the fundamental principles that must be recognised by any programme which aims at lasting success.

Rural uplift becomes impossible if service is directed to one or two or more, but not all of the villager's needs. The programme has to be sufficiently comprehensive and its execution simultaneously directed to all his main needs. In other words, it is practically futile to confine rural work to the economic, the health, the social, the moral or any other needs of the villager. Success is possible only when all sides of rural life are approached and that simultaneously.