

**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.



Rural reconstruction is impossible except in so far as it is a process which is worked from within. All work directed from without is transitory and has value only so far as it secures action by and from within the village itself. When this is forgotten, much of the services that is done, however valuable in itself, is quickly lost. Not only is it a waste, but also it undermines faith and retards normal progress. All rural reconstruction work should be severely conceived and carried out as a species of education. Not education in the ordinary sense; but as Adult Education irrespective of literacy. That is the only method that is really possible or justifiable. Every line of service should be conceived and worked out as a part of education. Take for instance, co-operative credit. Even that service should not be worked out merely as a banking concern for providing relief to individual villagers from the grip of the usurious money-lender, but as an educational agency in regard to economic values and joint action, and for education and training in rural leadership. It is one thing to work the co-operative society as a bank and a totally different thing to work it as an educational agency even when confining that education to purely economic affairs. In the same way, service along all other lines should be thought out and carried out as various <sup>etc.</sup> of one central process of adult education. This will mean slower <sup>and</sup> more difficult work, but everything that is done will abide and become creative in its turn.

It is a fallacy that adult education should begin with conferring literacy and then proceed to build on it more or less along lines of modern school education for the young. Should literacy be indispensable for adult education, we must give up the task at once. Happily, literacy is not indispensable to education which in its broad sense is only the transference of ideas from one to another. And this can be done in more ways than one. In the situation in India, with our problems so many, so diverse, so complicated, so urgent, and all the time becoming more and more grave with the steady and enormous increase of population, we indeed have no time to wait for the literacy of our people, but have to endeavour by all means to perfect a system of adult education irrespective of literacy. In all our plans and programmes the query should be, how much will the illiterate person get out of this? If the literate person gets more, it is all to the good. But the test should be the effect on the illiterate person. Nothing should be reckoned as satisfactory or sufficient which benefits only the literate and leaves the illiterate aside. It is not meant, however, that the conferring of literacy should not be designed as a part of the general curriculum of adult education. It need not be given a central place.

We must remind ourselves that we are dealing in our villages with one of the most settled communities in the whole world which is now



finding it almost impossible to adjust itself to modern requirements and standards which have come upon it with an insistence which is a challenge and a help. The process must be operative from the innermost citadel of what was once a completed structure and still remains a substantial one though battered on many sides. The resources for its reconstruction must be provided as far as possible from within the village and the real workers must arise there. Our part is merely providing the necessary education towards that end.

There are in village life several admirable institutions which can be turned to excellent account in the carrying out of such an educational scheme.

**The Weekly Market.** In India, this is a ready-made adult school. Practically, the whole village is there; and the same set of people flock there week after week. Any one who hires a few stalls and offers something attractive gets his chance freely with the whole crowd. Striking exhibits and charts should be displayed and simple talks related to a present problem, say, for instance, the price of groundnut or a pest which attacks a standing crop, given. More general topics can be introduced gradually in the course of the discussion of the specific problem of the villager. Lecturers are not difficult to get. In every district the Government has experts in several lines which are of practical importance to the villager. But they do not go about all the time to teach the rural folk. They do things if and when called upon to do so. In fact, most of the villagers do not even know about the existence of such experts. Some prominent place in the weekly market is a very natural means of bringing the two together. Looking at the exhibition and the charts and listening to the simple talks, the villager is naturally challenged by the advantage which comes from literacy. He can and does get an enormous amount of information and suggestion through the eye and the ear though he is not able to read and write. But he comes almost every week to a situation when he observes the advantages of those who are literate. He begins to crave for that advantage at least for his children. This effect is analogous to what has been proved to have happened among the Negroes of the United States when the peripatetic schools from Hampton and Tuskegee went among them.

The weekly market lends itself to continuous instruction in sufficient detail, as it is mostly conducted in the form of questions and answers. So, the results can be gauged and judged from time to time. Sale of better implements, seeds and fertilisers, poultry and bees and other things which we wish to introduce, can be done. Every such transaction is an occasion for more questions and answers. Books, pamphlets, bulletins and leaflets can be received and issued on that occasion.



In all these operations one should constantly keep in mind the educational aspect. As far as possible, our share should be confined to guidance. The actual work should be shared more and more and finally taken over entirely by the villagers themselves.

**The Village School.** The day school is for the young. The teacher's duty is supposed to come to an end in the evening when the pupils have left. The building is kept shut for the night. What an opportunity for Adult Education commences just then! The teacher could come back at lighting time when the village folk have returned from their daily toils. Talks, lectures, songs, *bhajan*s, lantern shows, classes, readings from newspapers, bulletins or pamphlets—anything can be done provided two wants are satisfied, namely,

(a) Our teachers' training schools should prepare rural schoolmasters to consider their schools as community centres and to work them as such.

(b) Assistance should be given to those schoolmasters by people like us to keep this side of their work up to the standard.

**The Village Theatre.** No village in our country appears to be incapable of improvising a theatre even at short notice for entertainment purposes. The traditional means of adult education employed for thousands of years in our country is music, song and story. A combination of these in the dramatic form is the most effective means for reaching the whole community, young and old, men and women. The didactic purpose has not detracted from the artistic standard of the drama. Plays with a purpose like *Harischandra* and *Nandanar* judged on purely artistic merit compare very well with the front rank productions of any literature. Therefore in the revival of the drama which is now preceding, we find some of our best talents interested in the writing of new plays suited to the needs and tastes of the present generation; and it should be our endeavour to keep the material improved all the time and to give the villager always the very best available. We should be having newer plays written all the time and they should be better every time. The main aim being education, the play should clearly convey certain ideas which are practicable to-day to the villager as he is. These special ideas which a play aims to convey should be in song form and set to popular and easy tunes. Then they catch the attention, grip the memory, and circulate in all the villages, literally singing themselves into the minds and eventually the lives of the people.

The village theatre as a vehicle for education could be most effective if the actors are raised in the village itself. Happily, the histrionic art comes naturally to us, Indians, whether we are urban or rural. In every group of say, 20 villages, anywhere in this country, there is enough talent for any play which we wish to stage for their



education. But we should get as able a man as possible to do the training. And there should be as much continuity as possible about this training so that the acting, singing and the music do improve all the time. The actors could be illiterate, but still education is there. The audience of the night and those many more who are not there but who will be singing the songs of that play for years, none of these need be literate.

**Co-operative Society.** Although this is of very recent introduction into the village, the principles on which it is based are not new to India. That the working of a co-operative credit Society is in itself a very rich means of education, need not be doubted by any one.

(a) The co-operative society often answers to an utterly desperate need of the villager and therefore when wisely handled, it becomes a powerfully-effective lever for his uplift along many lines.

(b) The co-operative society is a specific social organisation. It trains people in combined action, it disciplines them in following the leaders chosen by themselves, and it chastens the leaders in having their policies and actions guided in a democratic way, thus furnishing a model for corporate activity along many lines and drawing out workers from the community and training them as it gathers strength. There are indeed other direct values, ethical and economic, which need no recounting here. To any one who is willing to take advantage of a co-operative society as a means of adult education, it is full of wonderful possibilities.

Enough has been said to show that the means for adult education are already existent in the rural areas themselves. Extension lectures, university settlements, community centres and such like are not necessary excepting for training workers and for administrative convenience. For the education itself, it is far better to utilise existing institutions and opportunities, with a curriculum which is as comprehensive as are the actual practical needs of the villagers.

## SOME ASPECTS OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

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The subject in which I am interested is village industries, and my contribution to this conference will be to give you a brief survey of the work we are doing in Ikkadu, a small village in the Chingleput district, thirty miles from the city of Madras, and in the light of this experience see how it can be applied in other places.

To you who know India so well it is hardly necessary to dwell on the appalling poverty of the majority of the village people. It is one of the most urgent problems with which India is faced today. It was