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## RURAL EXHIBITION \*

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An Exhibition as a means of advertising new methods and wares is considered to be very useful. It really creates a sense of healthy rivalry and has served to produce very valuable results in improving the efficiency of production and the quality of the produce. It is accepted on all hands that Exhibitions are a necessary means to progress. Even the ignorant and illiterate can be educated very effectively through their sense of sight by presenting things in the most attractive manner in an exhibition. Thus an exhibition is fundamentally a means for the education of the masses.

Government Departments and business organisations have conducted or taken part in exhibitions with great success. Such exhibitions were mostly arranged in urban areas or in very important villages where alone they could secure the necessary co-operation from the local public. From them a few of the organisations have without much effort been able to achieve very good results to help them to make progress and expand their business while others have not had such good opportunities in spite of the great pains taken and care bestowed on putting up the show in a very telling manner. Business-men who were attempting to secure patronage from a wider circle or to popularise their produce and to find a market for them have succeeded best in them so much as to say that some of the exhibitions have become an array of show rooms or shops wherefrom sales are effected to new customers. Stalls containing curios, fancy goods, toys, carving and inlaid works, furniture, etc. are the most popular places in these exhibitions; Cotton, woollen or silk fabrics take the next place of importance while exhibits on subjects of rural importance such as agriculture, sanitation &c., attracted the least attention. The reason for this state of affairs is not far to seek; since it is due to the simple fact that the visitors to such exhibitions are mostly urban people who can have little taste or interest in rural subjects. Taking into consideration the fact that more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population of India live in rural parts it will be clear that these urban exhibitions can

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hardly benefit them, from the point of view of practical education which forms the essential purpose of an exhibition.

We had exhibitions in certain places on festive occasions. Though they were in rural areas and attracted very large crowds, the people who used to come there appear to have to transact a particular business and as soon as they finish that, they are found to get away in order to avoid the congestion of the place. Most of the people that often come into the exhibition stalls and spend sometime there, are such as have little by way of occupation. They cannot also be benefited by the show as they lack the incentive to study things or are too lazy to do so. At times it has been found that such persons speak disparagingly about things they saw at the exhibition and conduct, as it were an anti-propaganda.

For instance at the Tiruvannamalai Deepam festival we have one of the biggest gatherings in South India. Those who come to purchase cattle finish the bargain and get away as soon as possible, since it is difficult to keep and look after the animals in a crowded place. The largest gathering is on the most important Kirthika day when devotees coming for the occasion from distant places anxiously await the lighting up ceremony and follow the grand procession of the deities round the hill with all religious fervour. Most of them have little leisure to get into the Exhibition stall and study agricultural matters, since the sight seeing and religious functions in the temple continue throughout the day.

Thus it will be clear from the above facts that in such gatherings also the real ryot is not so fully attracted as one would at first sight expect. The ryots who do gather on such occasions are immersed in the gaities of the fair or festival or are preoccupied with the socioreligious aspects of the function. They are also in too light a mood to think of and bestow attention to their own profession on these occasions and so fail to get benefited by the exhibition to the extent we desire. In cases where conditions were very agreeable some have been really benefited. We are not satisfied with this small achievement which is never commensurate with the efforts made. So also in jamabandi camps wherein the gatherings are more exclusively of village officers and agriculturists, the lectures and exhibitions conducted did not produce the desired effect as the people were pre-occupied with grievances which they were placing before the jamabandi officers. The village officers themselves are most anxious about the trial they have to stand and the final orders they have to receive from the jamabandi officers on their year's work. Another attempt made was to stage our shows in weekly shandies. Here too the progress made has not been very great for the reasons that such shandies are of too short a duration and the ryots attending them have little time for self-education after transacting their more serious business of selling and buying things for which they go to the shandy.

It has become the fashion to arrange in urban areas what are called "All India Exhibitions"; and in these places a large number of sections is

represented under the categories of Fine-arts, Industries, Forest, Health, Agriculture etc. The visitors to such exhibitions are mostly urban. The very few villagers that get into the ground are often attracted to the curio-shops or bucket shops where the crowds congregate. Unless it be following a prominent visitor like the Premier the exhibition of rural subjects remains mostly unnoticed. The modern tendency is to conduct a number of "All India Exhibitions" simultaneously in different parts of the same province and as such the All India scope of the exhibition is very much curtailed.

One exhibition in a town for the whole district also appears to attract too little attention of the rural population and much less it is, that they attempt to avail of the occasion for exhibiting their own products and compete for prizes. Experience shows that divisional or Taluk exhibitions are sharing almost the same fate as they have also failed to create a real sense of competition among the farmers of the area. However, it was found that in the two latter types of exhibitions people could be made to take interest and to exhibit some of their products when demonstrators concerned exert much from behind the screen. Proceeding in this strain, the idea of conducting a rural exhibition was thought of and a scheme was prepared. The Director of Agriculture was kind enough to encourage the scheme. The Indian National Congress has probably accepted this view and began to hold its sessions in rural areas.

The scheme is fundamentally different from all other kinds of exhibitions as it is meant to cater directly to the needs of the villagers in the rural areas so as to create a desire to arise from within, to produce better things, to adopt better ways of life and to exhibit them with a healthy sense of rivalry.

We have a number of organisations meant to improve the lot of the villager. They often fail to attain their objects, for the simple reason that they could not stimulate individual effort towards progress. This novel kind of exhibition is meant to create a feeling of competition among the individuals of a locality in excelling one another in adopting improvements in all aspects of village life particularly with reference to farming which is the basic industry of the villager. The villager is encouraged to make his surroundings more and more sanitary by conserving all sorts of refuses as manure in the best way possible. He is forced to put in individual effort to produce best crops by adopting improvements in cultivation, manuring, weeding or by the use of improved seeds and to take up all profitable side-lines of farming.

Since we met here last I have been thus able to make some progress in advertising Agricultural and other items of improvements in village life. From the experience gained by the one exhibition conducted in Malabar I am able to assure you that it has acted as a powerful force to make the villager adopt improved methods in all aspects of rural life more powerful than any other method of propaganda so far adopted.

I venture to place before you the following few details to indicate what was actually done in "this Socio-economic experiment" and the effects produced thereby in the locality.

The scheme was printed in English and vernaculars and distributed liberally in the centre advertising the exhibition nine months in advance in a few villages in and around Tritala, a village on the bank of the Ponnani or Bharata River. The village was selected for the reason that suitable human material was found available there to work up the scheme. There is also a good co-operative organisation working in that centre. The responsibility for arranging and conducting the exhibition was largely entrusted to the co-operative organisation, under the guidance of the local Agricultural Demonstrator.

The society made available to the ryots the necessary materials like seed, manure, pamphlets, etc. to enable them to start the work early enough and to do their part best to compete for prizes. When later on it was found that a large number of people of the locality attempted to compete in adopting agricultural and other improvements to help rural welfare, a committee of judges was formed consisting of the local Agricultural Demonstrator, the Co-operative Inspector and three good ryots of the place. Numerous plots of paddy crops grown with improved strains of seed, properly cultivated plantain, vegetables, fruits and root crops besides fodder and green manure crops, pulses, gingelly and well preserved manure in pits, etc. came up for competition. Their households and cattle sheds with clean surroundings also competed, for prizes. They were all judged in their respective places to the entire satisfaction of the competitors.

The final meeting was held on 13th February in a spacious pandal specially erected for the occasion and decorated with evergreens, flags, etc. The neighbouring ryots gathered in large numbers and accorded a warm and fitting reception to the visitors. There was also a regular exhibition arranged in the pandal and the school building nearby. The exhibition thus put up was quite an interesting display of big roots of Tapioca, large plantain bunches, fine specimens of pineapples and a variety of vegetables and selected seeds all specially grown for competing for the prizes. Jams and jellies made from different fruits, good bunches of coconuts and arecanuts, etc., live bee colonies, improved poultry, choice cattle including good cows, work bullocks and breeding bulls were the additional features. There was a separate health section with a baby show. Some of the schools exhibited their products—labours of their children in such items as embroidery, basket making, drawing and clay models competed for prizes. Competitions were held in spinning, both by boys and girls, in public speaking, wrestling and music. A health show exhibiting control measures against infectious diseases and sanitary aspects of village life was put up by the Health Department. A small departmental show of improved agricultural products, specimens of pests and diseases and charts was also put up in the school building. The Health and Veterinary departments co-operated whole

heartedly with the Co-operative and Agricultural Departments in making the show a success. There was a number of instructive lectures delivered by the Departmental officers particularly with regard to Health, Sanitation, Co-operation, Veterinary science including Cattle rearing, and Agricultural improvements all bearing on village uplift. Manure conservation with a view to utilise all waste materials as such by making them harmless to the household in order to provide necessary sanitation was given great emphasis as the basic work on which advance in the farming must depend. It is interesting to note here that a ryot who won the first prize in manure conservation had more prizes to his credit namely the first prize for the best paddy and best plantain crop besides others for the sanitary condition of the cattle shed and clean household. Thus 76 prizes were awarded for various items for which there was keen competition. In most of the items three prizes were awarded.

The Boy scouts from a neighbouring High School added to the grandeur of the occasion by the display of scout drill ; so too Kolattam by school girls. The scouts were very helpful in making arrangements for the exhibition and maintaining order in the big gathering. The ryots who mustered strong evinced keen interest in the exhibition and great enthusiasm prevailed.

The visitors from distant places were eager to see what a rural exhibition meant. The Co-operative Union came forward with a request that the Government Departments may help them to make this exhibition an annual event and offered to conduct the exhibition in December. The workers of the place extended invitations to a few more villages round about Tritala to join the exhibition and compete for prizes.

At the very outset by way of providing necessary materials to the ryots to introduce Agricultural improvements, the Co-operative Union undertook to stock and sell improved seeds, manures and implements etc., thus the union began to serve the locality as a useful depot. There was a ready response from the ryots to adopt Agricultural Improvement advocated by the Department and the Union agreed to increase the scope of the Co-operative depot to meet the demands for competition next year. A sub depot has thus been practically opened there. In short it may be said that Agricultural reconstruction is set on foot in this centre on a firm basis, thereby paving the way for a demand for such knowledge and keener incentive for their adoption was made to arise from within.

The Judges and competitors walking from field to field for judging crops was an impressive show in itself. This roused a sort of enthusiasm and spirit of healthy competition which was given free expression by ryots by way of challenging one another for prizes in the next exhibition.

The exhibition centre is gradually becoming a centre for the dissemination of knowledge on rural welfare. The depot gets sufficiently advertised. Rural Development would become easy if the Development Departments heartily co-operate. This one show has attracted the attention of people

in different places, and more centres are seeking help for the conduct of such exhibitions.

If an exhibition of this kind becomes an annual event in several centres in the same taluk there may possibly arise a sense of competition among different centres and the progress may become more rapid.

Health week, Baby show, Educational, Industrial (Rural) and Agricultural Exhibitions can all be held in the same place at the same time. This should certainly add to the utility and grandeur of the occasion attracting more people. I would even go to the extent of suggesting that such a show may last for two or three days with instructive lectures and useful programmes for demonstration and competition, besides a few items of varietal entertainments to break the monotony of its business aspect. Radio sets can come handy for a part of such entertainments.

The last but not the least is the question of finance. It often happens that the enthusiastic worker in a village is a poor man and the villagers are themselves poor. It was therefore necessary at the outset to admit exhibits free of charge into the stall and the amount collected as local subscription was necessarily small. It is however gratifying to say that they contributed their utmost in cash, thereby providing funds for awarding prizes. The kind support given to it by the President and Secretary, Palghat Agricultural Association, was a substantial help.

I would suggest that this may be accepted as one of the lines of work for which financial grant may be made by the Government on the recommendation of the Departmental Officers. Such help may be required in the initial stages until the organisations build up their own finances. I commend these results of this exhibition to the workers assembled here and invite their valuable criticisms and remarks indicating how further improvements can be effected in the programme.

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## GREEN GRASS\*

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Grass is the most important item in this world on which civilisation depends. Without grass there will be no cattle and sheep and no humus for the soil to enable crops to grow; even among crops, it is the grass family that yields the most important food materials for man-kind.

In spite of the fact that this country has seen many civilisations and had comparative peace for well over a century, it is remarkable that very little work has been done on grasses. There has been one continuous war with the Forest Department for facilities for grazing and of late, certain forests were handed over to the Panchayats and the grazing fees have been halved.

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