

CD: 352

CD 352/2  
CD 370

**LEADERS**

**IN THE**

**MAKING**

220

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION



*October 1965 (Asvina 1887)*



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# LEADERS IN THE MAKING

CD 330/2

CD 370 (L)

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Issued on behalf of  
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

21, 13.5, 24





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## A FARMER PROFITS BY 'BHARAT DARSHAN' TOUR

**N**UMEROUS farmers who visited the World Agriculture Fair, held in Delhi in 1960, learnt many things and carried back many new ideas to their farms. But Jadav Das of Kaliaganj Community Development Block, in West Dinajpur, West Bengal, brought back only one thing, namely, "inspiration".

"You have to see in order to believe how hardworking the Punjabi farmers are. They have turned arid areas into green fields. If I could spread this message to my brother farmers through my own example of hard toil and implicit faith, I would be doing the greatest service to my country,"—it was thus that he summed up the mission of his life.

And he has already done something worth telling the people even outside his village.

After Partition, West Bengal got only a subdivision and a police station from the original Dinajpur District. This was then a strip of land between the north and the south of the truncated new State of West Bengal. And soon it was flooded with migrating displaced persons. Raiganj, with five thousand people, became overnight the abode of seventy thousand persons. To this patch was added, later on, a sub-division from adjacent Bihar and a new district of West Dinajpur was created.

People were still roaming in search of food and shelter. The jungles had to be cleared and roads laid out before hamlets could grow.

"There was not much water for irrigation either. The thick forests had to be cleared for land to be brought under the plough. We killed many leopards and snakes to make this place habitable," testified Shri Das, narrating his first experience on this barren land.



The pre-partition Dinajpur District was famous for its 'Badsha Bhog',—the quality rice; other attractive varieties were also grown in plenty. But all these assets were now on the other side of the border. On the Indian side, the land was poor and only primitive methods of cultivation were in vogue. The existing production was thus hardly enough to feed the numerous inhabitants of Raiganj.

The migrants had to perform a miracle to grow adequate food. They got hold of the little strip of land and with the help of their better agricultural skill reclaimed it and endeavoured to provide whatever irrigation facilities they could. Tube-wells were sunk where there were none. The quiet Sreemati, a tributary of the turbulent Mahananda river was harnessed for irrigation purposes. The migrants secured some technical guidance from the staff of the community development blocks and got some money as well.

Great reliance was placed on tank irrigation which was common in the area and had great potentialities. This was so because a tank, on an average, could irrigate 50 *bighas* of land as against seven *bighas* by hand-operated tube-wells. Diesel was still a luxury and electricity was totally unknown there. But enough volunteers to dig the tank or even to desilt the existing ones were unfortunately not forthcoming. Here Shri Jadav Das stepped in. He had seen Punjab farmers squeezing out water even from most difficult lands.

"Why can't we do it here when the water level is so near?" he asked his fellow villagers. Sarvashri D. Guha and A. Das responded on the spot. So did a dozen others. These handful but picked men started work to the accompaniment of cheers and also jeers. Now it is all cheers, of course. Many other villagers have followed the example set by the villagers of Lakshmipur, the village of Shri Das. Neighbouring villages saw these things done before their very eyes. People now believe in the adage "Where there is a will, there is a way".

But Shri Das did not stop at that. If the visiting Punjab farmers inspired him to work harder, the various exhibits and



demonstrations at the exhibition opened up a new vista before him. He learnt about getting two crops, sometimes even three, from the same field. He started appreciating the value of crop rotation.

Not only did he learn, but he spread this knowledge by doing what he saw and thus showing to others what could be achieved. His village, nay, the whole of the Raigunge Sub-division is now raising two crops—*aus* or *kharif* crop and *aman* or *rabi* crop.

The secret of Shri Das's success lies in the fact that he grows more crops in less time and with less wastage. He sows *aman* seeds a bit earlier and transplants them in the month of *Sawan* at a time when *aus* is ready to be harvested and in the same field. He thus saves time. Because of transplantation, seeds broadcast in one and a half *bigha* serve the requirements of eighteen *bighas*. Asked as to what happened before, he said, "We were broadcasting ten seers of seeds per *bigha*. Eighteen *bighas* did require 180 seers. Now only fifteen seers serve the purpose."

He also makes his own compost out of water-hyacinth which grows abundantly and is a menace to public health as it breeds anopheles. He has also discovered that oil cake and ammonia sulphate make a good combination for paddy growing.

Jute, the golden fibre, which requires so much of tender care and nursing, has also been introduced. West Bengal, as is well known, had all the jute mills after partition, but the raw material, *i.e.*, jute was grown mainly on the soil of East Pakistan. The position has since changed. India has become self-sufficient in raw jute. To this, West Dinajpur's contribution is not insignificant. This has been made possible by the hard work of the displaced persons. They not only made use of their past experience, but vastly improved on it with the passage of time.

As a result, not only jute, but many other cash crops and vegetables have also been introduced. One of them is the Sonapat variety of chillies which despite favourable soil was not cultivated extensively in Raigunge. Shri Das took many a tip



regarding its production and marketing from the World Agriculture Fair, and started its cultivation in the area. The place now literally goes red when ripe chillies, field after field, are dried in the open.

But the most fascinating thing was the cultivation of *Parwal* as a commercial crop. Till recently it was not grown in the area at all. Once Naskar Dev Sharma invited a displaced family to stay with him and thus learnt about its cultivation. Now each household grows it in sufficient quantities. Several farmers with limited land, earn up to one hundred rupees per month in the season. Shri Das, being a progressive farmer, earns much more. He uses his land judiciously. He follows the latest techniques in farming and also tells people what he finds profitable. "But", he confesses modestly, "we have yet to learn much from others in the field of agriculture. There can be no finality in it."

## HE LED THE MODEL VILLAGE OF AMOOR TO PROGRESS

**A**MOOR was selected as the model village in Trichirapalli District in the year 1955 and was awarded a certificate of merit and a prize of Rs. 1,000 by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru.

The story of success of the village is the story of achievements of Shri Thangaraju Pillai, a middle-aged man, who, as President of the Panchayat, has devoted a major portion of his time and energy for the welfare of the village. All the outstanding activities carried out by the Panchayat bear the impress of his dynamic personality, forethought and enthusiasm. It is a tribute to his sound leadership that he has succeeded in winning the whole-hearted co-operation of his fellow villagers in building up the village as a model one.

The most striking work that the Panchayat has done is the provision of piped drinking water supply to the villagers. An



automatic pumping set has been installed at a cost of Rs. 12,000 and water tap facilities provided at six different places in the village. Out of the six water taps, two have been fixed in Harijan *bastis*. All these taps and the automatic pumping set are maintained by the Panchayat. There is a proposal now to construct an over-head tank at a total cost of Rs. 46,000 under the National Water Supply and Sanitation Scheme.

The village, surrounded by fertile paddy fields, has made great strides in the sphere of agriculture. Improved seeds, chemical fertilisers and insecticides are purchased at wholesale prices and sold to the farmers at comparatively cheaper rates by the Panchayat through the co-operative society. The villagers have formed a co-operative marketing society also. There is also a proposal to construct a godown at a cost of Rs. 12,000 for storing the foodgrains. Half the cost of the building will be borne by the Government and the remaining half will be paid by the Panchayat in easy instalments. A co-operative credit bank has been started to enable the villagers to get loans from the bank at low rates of interest with facility to repay it on a long-term basis. The Co-operative Milk Supply Society, started in the year 1952, is functioning efficiently under the guidance of some of the leading farmers of the village.

The information centre run by the Panchayat is being increasingly made use of by the villagers. It is located in the centre of a beautiful small park where useful literature including several daily papers, weekly and monthly magazines are available for reading. A library attached to the centre contains about 100 publications. Valuable books on agriculture, cottage industries, community development, public health and hygiene, rural economy, etc. are available in this library. During their off-time, the villagers go through these publications and keep themselves posted with up-to-date information on all important subjects. A social education committee constituted by the Panchayat is in charge of the information centre and other social education programmes. A community listening set has been installed in the centre by the Panchayat. A young farmers' club is actively functioning which encourages games and other



field activities amongst the youth of the village. Free mid-day meals are provided to deserving school children from the contributions made by the villagers themselves.

Substantial progress has been achieved in the sphere of public health as well. Three public latrines, one urinal, one dry-earth latrine, one Wardha-type lavatory and bath rooms have been constructed for the villagers. A number of dustbins have been provided at various convenient places to receive the waste materials.

The village, which is about half a mile from the Tiruchy-Salem main road is connected by a *kacha* road. Recently, with the construction of a road and a bridge over three channels, it was linked to several nearby interior villages. The villagers have contributed about Rs. 3,000 to these important works. The Panchayat has mobilised the under-employed and the unemployed for the implementation of various village development schemes. Cottage industries like match factory, pencil factory, etc. have been recently introduced in the village. *Charkhas* of the improved type have been distributed amongst the women-folk to encourage hand-spinning.

Sound leadership is the key to the success achieved by this village. The Panches are alive to their duties and they carry out the various programmes with sincerity and devotion. This evokes spontaneous and whole-hearted co-operation of the entire village leaving little room for political or communal controversies.

## BASNI MAKES HEADWAY UNDER ITS YOUNG SARPANCH

**B**ASNI, a village of 6,800 people in the Nagaur Panchayat Samiti in Rajasthan, has made rapid progress under its young and enthusiastic Sarpanch Shri Mohammad Usman. Situated at a distance of five miles from the city of Nagaur, it has



charming natural surroundings. Its beautiful mosque attracts hundreds of visitors who call it the "Child of Bombay".

Before the wave of Panchayati Raj swept the State, this village was like most others—backward in agriculture having a low percentage of literacy and with little or no medical facilities. However, as soon as the village Panchayat came into being under the Panchayati Raj scheme two years ago, things began to move forward. The villagers were, red with a new hope, enthusiasm and a determination to lead their village to progress and prosperity. In Mohammad Usman, they found their leader and chose him to be their Sarpanch.

Education is the source of all progress. Consequently, they turned their immediate attention towards wiping out illiteracy from the village. The "School Chalo" campaign launched throughout Rajasthan found its echo in this village also. It was decided to send every child of school-going age to the school. Today the village has one middle school and a girls' primary school. In all, there are 640 children who go to the school. Little wonder that the village got the first prize in the "School Chalo" campaign in the district. In view of the mounting enthusiasm of the villagers in the cause of education, need is now being felt to convert the middle school into a high school.

Apart from educating the children, efforts were also made to make the adults literate and wide-awake through night-classes and social education programmes. As a result of these measures, the percentage of literacy has risen to 46.

Thanks to the generous contributions of Mohammad Usman and Ghulam Mohammad, two rooms have been built for the primary health centre, which has now six beds. Another philanthropist, Isa Munoo, has presented a microscope worth about Rs. 3,000 to the centre.

Agriculture which is the main occupation of the villagers has been given the place of pride in the village development plan. The cultivators have adopted *medh-bandi* and other dry-farming practices. But the main hurdle is the non-availability of water



for irrigation. At present, only one crop of *jowar* and *bajra* is being produced. With better irrigation facilities being planned, agriculture is likely to improve considerably in the not-too-distant future.

## THEY WIN THE ECONOMIC BATTLE OF PANIPAT

PANIPAT, in the district of Karnal, the land of Kurukshetra of the Mahabharat fame, has witnessed many a tide of India's political history in the past. May be, the new war waged on the food-front will create an equally important landmark in the economic history of India. This unproductive and backward district of pre-partition Punjab, has now become a surplus paddy-growing area. Whereas, in 1947, not much paddy was produced here, the production now exceeds 38 lakh maunds every year. The barren battle fields of Kurukshetra, where brother killed brother, are now humming with productive activities, farmers joining hands in the onward march.

Karnal once used to be a notorious place of cattle lifters. While farmers on the other side of the Punjab were reaping a bounteous harvest through sweat and toil, the local people in Karnal were taking things easy. They looked to God for food and blamed their *Kismet* when enough was not forthcoming. But the displaced persons from West Pakistan set them to some serious thinking.

"Why can't we have the same things here which we had in Lyallpur?", asked ninety-year old Sardar Bishan Singh of himself. Had not he and his colleagues turned the barren lands there into fertile belts?

But that was years ago in 1895 when he was hardly twenty-five. Could he repeat that performance now also?

His was an indomitable spirit in a frail body. His sons and grandsons, swaying their tough muscles, came forward. Three



other displaced farmer families joined in the venture. They also enlisted the services of three other artisan families, who were in search of jobs, to clean 50 acres of the snake-infested jungle and reclaim it for cultivation. That was how Masana village came into existence. It became the beacon light of self-help and self-reliance in those gloomy days. It is still spreading light to the surrounding areas.

In 1947 when the displaced persons from West Punjab trekked their way to District Karnal, it did not produce much rice. Statistics show that the yield was about four lakh maunds a year. Now it accounts for one-fourth of the paddy produced in the whole State. From four lakh maunds to over 38 lakh maunds is no doubt a big stride; but far more significant is the event as a saga of self-help and self-reliance.

Reclaiming land at Masana was not an easy job. As young Krishan Lal of the same village put it, "No one would care to accept land in this jungle area even free. I lost my way through that jungle one day when I was coming back from the school. Now there is hardly any piece of land unreclaimed in and around the village. All the 900 acres of land of Masana have been brought under the plough."

Not only new villages have come up, old ones have been improved and developed. The displaced persons brought with them a resolute spirit which enthused everybody. They had the technical know-how and set examples in increased production for others to follow.

Nathiram of village Bhutana still recalls how a handful of men, who had come in search of shelter, built up the township of Nilokheri, brick by brick. To start with, they cleared 11,000 acres of thick jungle, 750 acres of which were put under cultivation. Within a short period, 100 villages round about the township were covered by the C.D. Programme and hundreds of acres of additional land was reclaimed. Miles after miles of paddy fields now greet the visitor to this area. In Bhutana, Nathiram's village, 900 acres are under cultivation. Another 4,000 acres have been reclaimed in Sammura village.



Sardar Wirsia Singh of Saunkra makes no empty boast when he claims to have produced *basmati* rice of the finest quality in the State. He used to grow quality seeds himself in Sheikhpura, now in Pakistan. Some of his relations in India used to get these from him. On reaching India he could lay his hands on these seeds, which were already in great demand. At present, quite a number of people produce this quality rice and earn more than others. They have wisely invested this extra income in building *pucca* houses where electricity has been introduced recently. With the increased income, they can send their children to schools which they have themselves set up. Medical aid is also easily available. Roads have linked up the interior villages to the nearby towns and cities.

The displaced persons have brought with them new experience, talent as well as improved agricultural methods. The district authorities have utilised all these qualities to good advantage by planning and co-ordinating their efforts for better yields. Their emphasis on the fullest utilisation of local manual resources rather than dependence on chemical fertilisers imported from outside, has been paying rich dividends.

The shift to paddy cultivation in a predominantly wheat-growing area was no accident. Excessive rains and deforestation helped the sub-soil water level to rise phenomenally from 45 feet to 25 feet. While in other areas the authorities were busy merely complaining against the vagaries of nature, the Karnal District authorities strove to plan paddy cultivation on a large scale.

The topography of the district is peculiar,—sauce-pan shaped area is girdled by the river Jamuna on the eastern side. At the time of partition, waterlogging threatened the railway track—the life-line of Punjab. Consequently, two drains from Indri, the headworks of the Western Jamuna Canal, were constructed to drain off surplus water. The people were also encouraged to dig themselves a drain 9 miles long, 10 feet wide and 4 feet deep, from Nigdul to the Dussein Lake. Incidentally, these measures have helped eliminate malaria, too, which used to ravage the whole area for decades.



Production councils with 10 to 15 farmers were formed in selected villages to plan production and arrange distribution. These councils comprised members of local co-operative societies, progressive farmers, gram sahayaks, panchayat members, etc. The block officers and gram sevaks assist these councils in all possible ways.

The result is very heartening. The yield per acre in the district has gone up to 40 maunds from the usual 20 maunds, the record production having been as high as 90 maunds. Paddy *mandis* now handle bumper crops. Nilokheri *mandi's* transaction of 50,000 maunds in 1950 increased to 1,85,000 maunds by 1959. Some new *mandis* are also coming up. Paddy husking through haulers and huskers offers employment to many. Golden paddy grown all around has made all these developments possible. It is paddy, paddy everywhere.....!!

## THE LADY WHO BECAME SARPANCH

WHO SAID, "Our villagers, particularly women, are backward and unfit to shoulder the responsibilities of Panchayati Raj?" Perhaps a cynic who sees good nowhere! If you are still taken in by the cynic's arguments, then go and visit village Mandangir only 12 miles from the capital of India and meet the lady Sarpanch Kaushalya Sharma; you will have a new understanding and a new vision.

Kaushalya Sharma came into lime light because of her being the only lady Sarpanch elected during the recent Panchayat elections of Delhi rural area. And if for nothing else, just because of this, one may think she is rather extraordinary. But it is not so. She is just a village woman like hundreds and thousands of her sisters in the countryside. She has received formal education up to the VIIIth standard only. She does not observe purdah that unfortunately most of the village women still do. She mixes freely and moves with an air of self-confidence amongst the menfolk of the village. This is no doubt



a remarkable achievement on her part since in her father-in-law's village it requires great courage to discard the purdah. Her simple and unassuming ways are a far cry from the sophisticated airs of city-bred women who visit villages for social service.

She leads a happy family life. She has four sons studying in different classes. Her husband is a government servant who works in an office in Delhi and cycles home every day. She is full of admiration for him since he fully co-operates in all her public activities. In fact, she has inspired him to take ever-increasing part in social service. He is now the Secretary of the village co-operative society and as Shrimati Sharma says with pride, "With rolled sleeves and spade in hand, he follows me for taking part in *shramdan*."

Kaushalya Sharma is thus a typical village woman pre-occupied with her family life. And if she began taking interest in public activities and became the Sarpanch of a village, why can't thousands of other village women like her come forward and participate in the Panchayati Raj?

There is a huge tank, set amidst a grove of tall trees, just outside the village which stands as a monument to Shrimati Sharma's drive and initiative in securing public participation. She has been instrumental in its excavation year after year. She recalls vividly how under the blazing sun of the mid-summer, with spade in hand, she had worked alone, sometimes with just a few children to keep her company. But there was hardly any man or woman in the village who did not turn up in the long run to participate in the *shramdan*. She has already got one *ghat* paved, and her future plans are to strengthen the embankments of the tank. Her next public work was the retrieving of the *samadhi* of Baba Harsukh Das—a saint held in high esteem by the villagers. The *samadhi* had in course of time got buried under a heap of earth. With the help of womenfolk, she got the earth removed and built a cemented platform around it. The place is now used for *satsang*. The villagers gather there every evening and sing *bhajans* and offer prayers to the Almighty. Shrimati Sharma is a highly religious lady and she holds daily *concourse* to recite holy books like the *Ramayana* and the *Gita*.



Baba Harsukh Das, the village saint, it seems got pleased and showered his blessings on Shrimati Sharma, who thence onward rose high in the esteem and popularity of the villagers. She came to be looked upon as their leader and was consulted on all matters affecting the village. Her interest in public activities also grew. From purely religious and cultural activities, she began to participate in all other welfare and developmental activities. The education of the children and the welfare of women also began to claim her attention. It was through her efforts that a primary school was constructed. The villagers contributed about Rs. 10,000 in cash, kind and labour for it. A welfare centre meant for women and children run by the Social Welfare Board also claims her daily attention. She has got all the village streets paved by the villagers themselves without depending on any matching contribution from the Government.

As a result of these public activities, Kaushalya Sharma endeared herself to the villagers so much that they unanimously elected her to be their Sarpanch during the recent Panchayat elections. She is happy and proud of the distinction conferred on her by the villagers. She has now decided to devote all her spare time to the service of the village community. Immediately on becoming Sarpanch, the first and foremost task that she did was to obtain a clear-cut demarcation of the village common land and got *pucca burjies* (demarcation pillars) fixed up so that the common land might not be encroached by any individual farmer. This work is the first of its kind undertaken by any Panchayat in Delhi territory. Shrimati Sharma has not overlooked the important work of increasing agricultural production also. According to her, the greatest handicap is lack of adequate irrigation water. Her endeavour is to get electricity for tube-wells.

The village co-operative society which has a share capital of Rs. 10,000 has attracted deposits amounting to Rs. 15,000. It is a tribute to the confidence reposed in the office-bearers of the society that it has attracted such large deposits. If other societies could also do the same, the problem of financing them will be solved and the foundations of the co-operative movement will be truly well laid.



Thousands of other womenfolk in the countryside can easily become Pradhans and Sarpanches only if they follow in the footsteps of Smt. Kaushalya Sharma. As explained by her, the secret of her success is : remain loyal to the cultural and religious traditions and thereby win the confidence of the villagers. Once the women take charge of the Panchayats, most of their present difficulties and problems will disappear. Like the Mandangir Village Panchayat, these will be rid of disputes and party factions and march onwards to peace, progress and prosperity.

## FROM A GRAMSEVAK TO A PRADHAN

**F**ORTY-TWO YEAR old Shri Shanti Sarup Tyagi of village Burari got elected as the Chairman of the Block Development Committee of the Alipur Block in the Union Territory of Delhi. Not very long ago he had served in the same block as a Gram Sevak.

Shri Tyagi enjoyed a respectable social status before he took up the career of a Gram Sevak. He had built up a satisfactory homoeopathic practice. He had all those things which people usually hanker after in life—money and a respectable status. But as soon as the scheme of Community Development was inaugurated at Alipur by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952, something impelled him to participate in the programme. He decided to join the block as a Gram Sevak.

Shri Tyagi's outstanding achievements as a Gram Sevak won him the confidence of his superior officers. He became the natural leader of the Gram Sevaks in the block who always looked up to him for help and guidance. He had a knack of steering clear of ideological and impractical suggestions and to come to grips with hard realities. At the time of monthly meetings, it was he who raised his voice against the submission of far too many reports. Again it was he who maintained that



the system of framing targets and achievements arbitrarily had a corrupting influence on the Gram Sevaks inasmuch as this led them to give inflated figures. Development of agriculture and animal husbandry interested him most. He encouraged vegetable-growing and fruit-gardening in his circle since fruits and vegetables found a ready market in the capital city close by.

Explaining the circumstances that led him to seek the election as Pradhan of the Block Development Committee, he described how the bureaucratic attitude of the administrators had forced him to resign his post of Gram Sevak. He said that the previous year due to the construction of the Shahadra bund, the floods in the Jamuna had adversely affected a dozen villages of his circle and the surrounding area. There was a vast sheet of water all round and the villagers along with their cattle had to come out of their villages for safety. Thousands of starving cattle and villagers remained on the open roadside for three days waiting for Government relief. But none came. He met the Mayor and the Corporation authorities but to no effect. Seeing no other alternative course left, the villagers marched with their cattle to the residence of the Deputy Commissioner and the Mayor. This unique demonstration of thousands of famished cattle and villagers passing through the streets of the capital had its effect and the authorities sprang into action. The reserved wastelands on the Ridge road were thrown open for the cattle to graze till the emergency was over. Other relief measures also soon followed.

"Is it necessary to stage a demonstration in order that the officials might swing into action? Why cannot things happen automatically?" While Shri Tyagi was lost in this train of thought, he saw a ray of hope in the emerging Panchayati Raj. In it he visualised the only solution of the evils of bureaucracy and the attendant evils of a centralised administration. And so he decided to resign from the post of a Gram Sevak in order to be able to seek election under the new set-up of Panchayati Raj.

Asked as to the factors that led to his success in the elections as a Pradhan, he replied, "The strategy of my election was



simple. I left my election issue to the unanimous decision of the Gram Sabha and abided by it. I scrupulously kept myself away from political parties. I am of the view that elections under the Panchayati Raj should be fought on non-party basis. I toured on cycle and contacted personally all the Sarpanches and Panches of the 70 villages of my block."

Shri Tyagi has no illusions about the pace of reforms in the block even after his election as Pradhan. He knows fully well that in a democracy one has to keep in step with the rest of the elected representatives and considerable patience and tact is required to transform the administration so as to render it a suitable instrument of service. He has, however, firm faith in Panchayati Raj. He maintains that it is a step in the right direction and is bound to succeed. Of course, difficulties there would be which should be faced squarely and overcome. He believes that power is never given; it is snatched. The more vigilant and active the village representatives, the better they would be able to wield power under the new scheme of things.

## ALL-WOMEN PANCHAYAT OF MATTAMPALLI

**T**HE WOMEN of village Mattampalli have shown unmistakably that at least in some of the Community Development Blocks they are on the march and are moving faster than the menfolk. The eight-member Gram Panchayat of this village in Huzurnagar Block Panchayat Samiti of Nalgonda District in Andhra Pradesh, is constituted entirely of women—all elected popularly in November 1959.

Some of the conservative people in the village did not like the idea that only women should be elected to the Panchayat. They said, "This would mean female domination".

The Chairman of the Zila Parishad, an inhabitant of the village, however, persuaded the elders that women, too, could



run the village administration efficiently and that it was not desirable to curtail their powers.

The village has a population of 1,710 men and 1,890 women. The elections were conducted by show of hands. Of the eight seats, six were declared unanimously. In the contest for the remaining two seats, the men candidates were defeated.

Looking at the fast progress achieved by the Panchayat within a comparatively short period, even the conservative elements have begun to react favourably and are now extending to it their full co-operation. Women seem to be keener than the men on development works. They wish to make up for the slow progress registered in the past by the Gram Panchayat "dominated by males".

Substantial progress has already been registered in various spheres of village life. The village now has all the three basic institutions, viz., a panchayat, a co-operative and a school.

The Panchayat has given top priority to agricultural production. Under this programme, four small existing tanks have been repaired to provide irrigation. The co-operative society has built its own godown for storing improved seeds and chemical fertilisers for which there is a great demand. Line-sowing has been popularised for the cultivation of paddy as well as cotton. Twelve sprayers and four dusters have been purchased to control pests and diseases affecting the crops. A newly organised rural credit society has distributed Rs. 20,000 as production loans.

A veterinary first-aid centre is functioning in an effective manner. The Panchayat is also making efforts to replace the local breed of poultry by exotic birds and a Murrah buffalo has been purchased to upgrade the breed of the cattle.

Two adult literacy centres, run by the Panchayat, have made 300 persons literate. The Panchayat has purchased and installed a community listening radio set for Rs. 275.

A *bal vihar* with a children's park has been set up at a cost of Rs. 1,000. Members of the Youth Club have constructed a library building through *shramdan*.



A Mahila Mandal consisting of 50 members looks after the welfare of the village women. Through its efforts, a sewing centre has been opened and 30 smokeless *chulhas* have been set up.

The Gram Panchayat has also taken keen interest in the uplift of the Harijans. Two new drinking water wells have been constructed and 23 Harijans have been provided with financial grants for the construction of houses.

A *kacha* road has been built at a cost of Rs. 3,000 to connect Mattampalli with Amaravaram; a bus service now connects the village with the outside world. The Gram Panchayat has in hand the construction of a Panchayatghar, estimated to cost Rs. 10,000.

## KARAM SINGH INVENTS A WATER PUMP

**N** ECESSITY need not always be the stimulant for invention. Some inventions owe their origin to the inner urge which impels imaginative people to create newer, better and more useful things. A little encouragement is all such people require. This is illustrated by the story of Karam Singh, a simple unassuming factory worker. Gifted with an inventive bent of mind, Karam Singh has succeeded in manufacturing a new type of water pump called "washer pump".

This new device is capable of lifting more water than the traditional *rahat* (persian wheel). It costs less and is more economical to operate and maintain.

The imaginative mind of Karam Singh was fired by what he saw in one of the huge exhibitions put up in Delhi some time back. He saw some agricultural implements on display in one of the pavillions and felt the urge to devise implements suited to local conditions, so as to reduce the labour of his fellow farmers and help them produce more. As some of these implements were semi-mechanical, he thought that he could also achieve



useful results through a judicious combination of mechanical and animal or human power.

Karam Singh gave up his employment in one of the factories in the capital so that he could devote more time to the study of the exhibits. Spending long hours in the exhibition, he made sketches and took photographs of the implements on display. By the time the exhibition was over, Karam Singh had learnt how to design newer and better implements. He was now ready to put his newly acquired knowledge and his inventive faculty to some creative use, but soon he was up against financial difficulties.

The answer to his difficulties lay in co-operative effort. With some persuasion he could muster some of his fellow workers to form an industrial co-operative society devoted to engineering and manufacturing. Working overtime, Karam Singh and his band of enthusiastic workers completed the new washer pump device in the course of a few months.

The pump has a pipe four inches in diameter, through which water is lifted from the well. A chain is operated by a wheel at the top of the well which in turn is set in motion by a freewheel which can be operated by a bullock or a man (and with proper attachments even by an electric motor). The chain, to which washers are fitted at every five feet, passes through the pipe.

When the chain is set in motion the washers push up water through the pipe. As the washers come up, water flows into a container placed near the top of the well. From there it is diverted for irrigation or for any other use. Since the chain keeps on moving, water is continuously lifted by the washers, ensuring a constant water lift.

The experiments conducted on the washer pump so far show that 5,000 gallons of water can be lifted per hour as compared to 3,000 gallons per hour by the traditional *rahat*. Moreover, the washer pump can be manufactured cheaply; it requires only one-third of the quantity of iron that goes into the making of a *rahat*. The cost of the washer pump is about Rs. 375, besides another Rs. 110, the cost of the pipe. Its cost is expected



to be 40 per cent less than that of the *rahat*. Production on a large scale is expected to result in further reduction of the cost.

The inventor Karam Singh is a displaced person from West Pakistan. Making tools has been his occupation, first in Kapurthala and then in New Delhi. With his wife, five children and his parents, he lives in one of the new colonies built by the Government for displaced persons. India needs many Karam Singhs, for such people are the true builders of modern India.

## BRAHMO DEVI DIGS A WELL

**F**AITH can move mountains. This was proved when thirty year old Brahmo Devi along with three other women successfully dug a 54 ft.  $\times$  4½ ft. well in the tiny hamlet of Sohani in Loni Development Block, 14 miles away from Delhi.

Indeed it was a big news. But what made Brahmo Devi accomplish this herculean task was her confidence that 'women also can do it.'

Ever since Brahmo Devi came to her in-law's place, she was confronted with one problem viz. scarcity of drinking water. She had to run a household consisting of her husband, four small children and ten heads of cattle. In her father's place there was a well nearby. She had thus no water problem before marriage. In her in-law's place, the village *jhinwar* supplied three pitchers every day in exchange for two maunds of grains and two rupees a year. But that supply of water was very inadequate. Brahmo Devi supplemented it by herself bringing two to three pitchers of water from a distant well. Many a time she implored her husband to have a well dug, but to no effect. Then there was an incident which provoked her to dig a well herself.

On the *Tij* festival day in the month of Sawan, Brahmo Devi wanted more than the usual three pitchers of water supplied



by the village *jhinwar*. The *jhinwar* refused. In sheer disgust she sacked him then and there. In the evening when the tired husband returned from the field, Brahmo Devi narrated the story and suggested, "Let us have our own well. How long are we going to depend on others?"

"You have driven the *jhinwar* out. It is your job to arrange water for the house. Don't expect any help from me", the exhausted man snapped back.

That was too much for the proud lady. Could not she dig a well herself? The idea struck her and she took the decision that very moment.

Next day, the husband, as usual, returned from the field. And lo! she was digging it! He had completely forgotten last evening's incident. But Brahmo Devi did not. She dug up eight feet that very day.

The husband tried to dissuade her from the "mad" venture.

"You are not sure if there is any water at all there," he taunted.

"It must be somewhere down below. I won't rest till water is struck," she replied.

She had gone off her head, thought the villagers. "Women are the greatest trouble-shooters in this world," cracked some old 'wise' man. "Surely you can't get the land ploughed by sheep," whispered some one. And the despairing husband consoled himself thinking that Brahmo Devi, intelligent as she is, would give it up soon.

But he, like others, misjudged her strength of mind as also the feelings of the neighbouring women. Sixty year old Chandravati joined hands the next day. "Why should I not?" she explained, "Can I sit idle when *bahu*—the young married woman (meaning Brahmo Devi) is working?"

On the third day, two more ladies—Ratnakali and Paramali—joined. "How can we sit idle when the old woman is working so hard?" they said.



It was a difficult job—digging of a well—even for men who were not experienced in the line. But, as is said, faith gives strength even to the lame to cross a mountain. Bit by bit, these four valiant women went on digging during their off time. Jitters and sneers of the lazy and the critics only helped to provide more incentive to the determined ladies to dig the well.

By rotation, one lady would go down the hole in a basket lowered down with the help of a rope. With spade, she would scratch the earth, which was hauled up in the same basket. The work did not stop for a single day. Relieved from the onerous duties of the house, they would work on the well at night when others were enjoying rest after the day's hard work.

On the twenty-fifth day, there was great commotion in the village. The news got circulated: "Water is coming out!" The whole village, men and women, old and young, thronged to the scene. Yes, water was there. Brahmo Devi struck the spade for the last time and was hauled up in the same basket by which she had entered the pit. She remembered the first day of her working on the well when there was only one frail lady to send her down the pit. This time, at least a hundred hands had joined in pulling her up. Everyone admired the great feat. Said veteran Ranjit Singh; "Ladies have set an example." All assembled nodded assent.

The saga of the well has inspired people in the locality to cast off their age-old lethargy and inertia and to do something for themselves and for the community. Before the Block Development Officer appeared on the scene with Government's fifty per cent contribution of the total valuation of the well—which was Rs. 153—the villagers themselves raised a subscription of Rs. 255 and completed the masonry work. The well today stands as a bright monument to the courage and determination of Brahmo Devi and other village women who joined hands in this adventure.



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