



# Vikas Mela

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Issued by  
THE COMMUNITY PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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## PREFACE

In all community project areas, indeed, in all parts of rural India whether inside a project area or out of it, *melas* or fairs are common. They have been the traditional meeting grounds of people to exchange goods and also ideas.

Since the last four years, a new idea has been percolating into rural India through the operation of the Community Development Programme. The method of its operation is Extension—extension of the scientific practices which have been tested in the laboratory and also in the field. Extension has to be explained to the people and they must know how they can apply the improved practices in their respective spheres of work.

In modern times the press and the radio reach a large section of the community. There are, in addition, audio-visual methods in which a direct appeal to the eye and the ear is made. All these media carry the message of the programme to the individual at his home or at his place of work. But there are occasions when people gather in large numbers at a particular place which provide a unique opportunity to propagate such messages. Rural fairs are such occasions. Advantage could be taken of the traditional fairs in rural areas and new fairs, appropriately named “Vikas Mela” could be organised.

This pamphlet attempts to put down in one place the ideas that have developed in the Community Projects Administration regarding the organisation of ‘Vikas Melas’. It deals with the methods and organisation of such Melas, the programmes which should be

introduced and indicates the role of the officials and the non-officials. It is hoped that the pamphlet will provide an impetus to the project people for participating in existing fairs and organising new ones keeping the idea of Extension in view.

In the preparation of this pamphlet the Community Projects Administration has received assistance from the Allahabad Agricultural Research Institute which is gratefully acknowledged.

*Director,  
Information and Public Relations.*



## INTRODUCTION

Melas and fairs are traditional in India. From the days of the hoary past men, women and children have gathered on such special occasions and have shared the joys and pains in common.

In the past, religious festivals have provided the usual motive force for such gatherings. Confluences of the sacred rivers and holy shrines have attracted for centuries, millions who have trekked on foot and bullock cart braving the weather and ignoring the perils of the journey in response to the call of the Eternal. There have been, besides, traditional fairs which are held at certain places all over the country through generations.

People know of these fairs and festivals to which they look forward with eager excitement. They forget for the time being their limited individual identities and merge themselves in the crowd for a fragmental touch of infinity which constitutes the core of the philosophy of life in India. Men, women and children dressed in their best, come from far and near to participate in the spirit of joy and gaiety.

In the Western countries also such traditions prevail although the patterns may vary. The traditional British Industries Fair, for instance, is known to everyone. We in India had made our first big attempt on similar lines last year. The Indian Industries Fair in Delhi organised through non-official effort attracted perhaps the largest crowd ever collected anywhere in India on such occasions.

For the Community Development Programme, melas and fairs have more than ordinary importance. The programme deals with the vast mass of Indian humanity representing nearly 82 per cent of the population and scattered in 560,000 villages. A very small

percentage of this population is literate with the result that the written word cannot reach the majority of the people. They have to be approached indirectly and an impression has to be created through their eyes and ears.

As a means of mass communication in India *mela* is one of the most important media. It is in these gatherings that the villagers will come to know how the programme is bringing about a new transformation in their own areas. They also have an opportunity to compare notes with their counterparts in adjacent areas. Such melas could appropriately, therefore, be called *Vikas Melas*:



## CHAPTER I

### ORGANISATION OF VIKAS MELAS

While the object of this Manual is to offer a few suggestions on the organisation of Vikas Melas it must be made clear at the outset that it would be wrong to confine any *mela* to Extension activities only. It must be a normal mela with all its frivolities, its merry making, its enjoyment and its magicians, along with the activities on Extension. Then only such a Vikas Mela can succeed. The contents of a mela form the subject matter of another chapter where they have been dealt with in greater details. In this chapter we propose to deal with a few preliminaries regarding the organisation of a mela that must be kept in view.

#### Basic Consideration :

In the organisation of new melas, obviously the aim is to get the largest number of people at the place of the fair and secondly, which is important, to make it worthwhile for them to attend. The organisers of the mela should, therefore, bear in mind the following basic facts :

- (a) Is it going to be an *ad hoc* fair or is it contemplated to be a periodical fair ?
- (b) What is the estimated attendance ?
- (c) Will the site selected hold the expected gathering ?
- (d) Has the site got adequate facilities so that the amenities required by the people who would attend the mela can be provided ?
- (e) Has the site any other additional attraction, religious or historical or scenic beauty which will make the people come in addition to the attraction for Vikas Mela ?



- (f) To what extent traders and businessmen would be interested in the fair ?
- (g) Are the communication facilities adequate ? and
- (h) Finally, which is most important, have the people of the area been made sufficiently receptive to the idea of the fair so that they can take up its organisation themselves with assistance from the project authorities ?

Other things being equal, it is always better to site a mela near religious or historical places. Such places have attraction of their own and it is safe to assume that rural people will come to these places in large numbers if they know that fairs are being organised in such places.

The above observation, however, should not be construed to mean that all melas must invariably be held near religious or historical places. Other places can also be selected but care should be taken to see that the venue is such as will ensure good attendance.

### **Planning :**

Planning of a mela much in advance of the actual date is necessary. Such planning will be different according to the size and coverage of the mela that is contemplated. The nature of planning will be different for a small mela at the village level, the medium-sized mela at the project level and a big mela at the district level.

### **Village Mela :**

In the case of a village mela the Sarpanches can easily organise it near about the village. This does not require much of planning, nor very elaborate arrangements. If the idea is understood, panchayat members can organise such melas periodically and obtain necessary assistance from the project authorities. Panchayats should be clear in their mind that



in these melas the main theme that should be put across to the people is the message of the community development programme and the activities that are being taken up. Women and children should participate as fully as the men-folk. Organisation of the village melas will also be a great training to the village leaders who in their representative capacity will have to participate in the project mela in which the people of the entire block are expected to participate.

### **The Project Mela :**

It is of fundamental importance to note that a popular fair can only be organised by the people. Government can, no doubt, provide the initiative or even give a blueprint of the fair but the planning as well as the implementation must be in the hands of the people. The original sponsors, if there were any, of the big traditional fairs that we have in the country, have long passed into oblivion. But the idea has been ingrained in the hearts of the people who through unknown generations and centuries have participated and are still participating in such fairs. Therefore, it is most important to bear in mind the fact that a mela does not become successful only through smooth planning, although that is very important, but its success depends to a great extent on the popular enthusiasm that it can generate. At the outset such enthusiasm will no doubt be of a temporary character. But it is through continuous effort and periodical planning that a tradition can be built up so that the people would start looking forward to such melas.

### **Planning & Organization :**

Simultaneously with generating people's enthusiasm, the first essential is to set up a Mela Committee consisting of one representative from every ten villages in a block. It should be made clear that it is not possible to take one representative from each village—though that should have been ideal—because



in that case the Committee would be unwieldy. The Village Level Worker's charge, therefore, might be considered as the unit for selection of a representative to the Mela Committee at the block level. This Committee should have, in addition, prominent non-official representatives including the local Members of Parliament and the State Legislature, the Police authorities, Health authorities, Publicity Department, etc. Other enthusiastic persons who have the required zeal and also leisure could also be nominated as Members of the Mela Committee. The local M.P. or the seniormost M.L.A. can be made the Chairman with the Block Development Officer as the Co-Chairman. Non-official chairmanship of such Committees is essential in order to impart a popular character to the programme, but the association of the Development Officer in the top executive position is equally necessary as a certain amount of project funds is likely to be spent for which the Government is responsible. In addition, there is the need for coordination of all departmental activities which only the Development Officer is in a position to ensure. The Development Officer must see that fullest opportunity is given to non-official initiative. Since the majority of the members of the Committee would be non-official it should be possible to retain its non-official character.

This Committee will have to consider the entire programme for the fair, the more important being :

1. Fixation of site.
2. Provision of amenities.
3. Coordination of activities of all concerned.
4. Fixation of the contents and the programme.
5. Implementation of the programme.
6. Publicity.
7. Organisation of a voluntary corps, etc.



## Selection of Site :

Some observations in regard to the selection of a site for the mela have already been made in earlier paragraphs. It has been stated that other facilities being equal the site should be fixed near some religious or historical place, so that people's innate attraction to these places can be taken advantage of. Other considerations that should be kept in view are :

- (i) Whether there is a sufficiently large open space with plenty of water near about. Water will be required both for drinking and for other purposes and it is a matter of primary importance. A few shady trees here and there would provide some relief ; too many of them, however, would obstruct easy flow of people.
- (ii) The site should be such that it is easily accessible from all areas in the project. In other words, try to locate the site by the side of the main road so that not only people from all areas can come but also trucks, etc. can come.

An idea may crop up in the minds of the promoters of the mela that the site may be periodically rotated so that more villages get the advantage of the mela which, no doubt, provides some profitable business to people near about. Therefore, pressures might be brought in. On the other hand, change of venue every time might, to a certain extent, hamper the growth of a tradition which is very important in a continuous programme which Vikas Yojna is. A *via media* must be struck. If the members of the Mela Committees consider that it would be possible to build up tradition for the fair even by rotating the venue every year, the practice may be tried. On the other hand, if the Committee wants to build up tradition by fixing up a venue so that association of ideas can develop, that is an experiment worth trying. In any case, Community Projects Administration would



(iv) *Light*.—To have electric lights in a mela is a distinct advantage. Now that electricity is gradually extending to some of the rural areas, availability of electricity might be considered as an important criterion for fixing the site of the mela. Where, however, it is altogether impossible to have electricity other lighting aids have to be adopted, e.g. gas and petromax lights. A well illuminated mela is a tremendous attraction to the villagers and no pains or reasonable expenses should be spared for providing lights adequately.

(v) *Volunteer Corps*.—For the hundred and one odd jobs that the organisers of a mela have to look after, it is most essential to have a competent and trained volunteer corps which will take the responsibility for all the major items of work. The officer-in-charge of the volunteer corps should take orders from the Executive Officer of the Mela Committee and will distribute his men in accordance with a properly drawn-out plan in which all the varied requirements will be kept in view.

(vi) *Microphones*.—Microphones and Loudspeakers not only attract a crowd but they are most essential for controlling and directing a crowd. Loudspeakers should be fixed at various points in the mela connected with the main system. It is always safer to maintain duplicate sets of microphones, in case one fails.

(vii) *Control Room*.—For organising and directing the crowd in a mela and to give proper instructions to the volunteers posted at various points it is essential to have a Control Room in a mela. This should be under the direct command of the Executive Officer.

(viii) *Emergency Centres*.—An Emergency Centre should be set up equipped with a doctor and a nurse to provide first-aid in emergencies. The services of a doctor should be obtained through the Department of Health Services. The voluntary services of



male nurses should be found wherever possible. The Emergency Centre should be well-equipped with necessary facilities, equipments and medicines.

### **Restaurants and Hotels :**

In small moderate types of melas hotels are perhaps not necessary but there should be a number of eating houses. These should be periodically inspected by the health authorities to ensure that the food given is wholesome and is prepared under hygienic conditions. Water supply and personal cleanliness of cooks and bearers in these places must be specially watched.

### **Parks and Lawns :**

It is certainly no good to have a mela which is too much congested. Apart from the fact that it obstructs free flow of people, women and children find it difficult to elbow their way through the crowd so that they hardly get any impression of what is happening. Small parks and lawns, if properly laid, will therefore not only beautify the mela but also provide breathing space to the participants. Part of the parks and lawns can also be used for community broadcasts and social and cultural programmes.

### **Special amenities for Women and Children :**

Special amenities for women and children must be provided. These include bath rooms, children's playgrounds equipped with the usual play things, etc. In addition, if a special women's section in a mela is organised it will not only attract a large number of women, but experience shows that women of the locality will participate extensively, bring their own hand-made exhibits and make it a picturesque mela of their own. In West Bengal such women's melas are called "Anand Mela" and children's melas are called "Mani Mela". They have been found to be places of very great attraction for women and children who move untrammelled and build up an atmosphere of joy and entertainment.

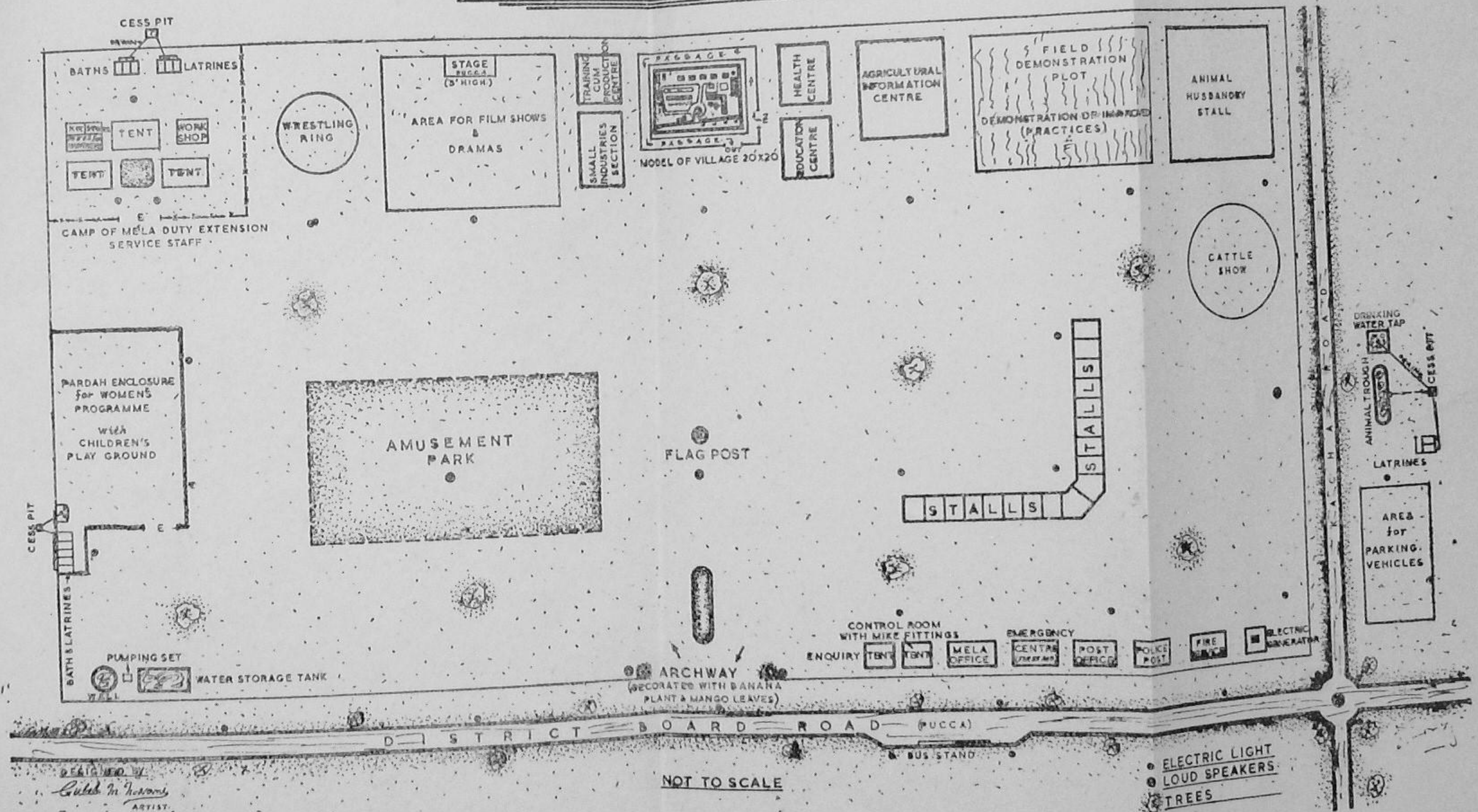


**Emphasis on Improved Practices :**

In the provision of the various types of facilities in a mela, a point that the Community Projects Administration would like to emphasize is that in all cases, the improved practices that have been evolved should be demonstrated. For example, in making latrines or bath rooms, the types that are being introduced in the project areas under the Community Development Programme should be constructed. Similarly in the kitchens, smokeless choolas should be installed. In other words, the fair being a *Vikas Mela*, every activity should reflect, to the extent possible, the method and approach of the programme and more particularly the benefits it can confer.



# PROPOSED LAY-OUT FOR VIKAS MELA





## CHAPTER II

### CONTENTS OF VIKAS MELA

In the preceding chapter we have dealt generally with the organisation and methods. In this chapter it is proposed to indicate items of extension activities that should form part of the Vikas Mela.

A Vikas Mela should bring out the ideology, approach, objectives, and the results of Extension in the context of the Community Development Programme. A mela being a visual demonstration, the greatest emphasis must obviously be on the physical aspects of work. It is through these that the idea is to be imparted and the objectives emphasised. The subjects below may be kept in view.

(a) **Agricultural Exhibition Centres.**—This must be organised on a comprehensive scale as in the rural context the importance of agriculture and animal husbandry can hardly be over-emphasised. An Agricultural Exhibition should have two sections :

- (1) the physical results that have been achieved in the project area in which the mela is being held, *i.e.* exhibits in the form of good crops, fruits and vegetables ; and
- (2) an Agricultural Information Centre in which demonstrations will be given about intensive cultivation methods, cultivation aids, manures, green manures, compost making, fertilisers, improved agricultural implements, etc.

(b) **Samples of improved crops.**—A miniature agricultural farm with a horticulture section, if it can be demonstrated by the side of an agricultural exhibition, would attract interested observers. Scientific laying of plots, the benefits of consolidation, methods of making bunds and small irrigation channels, should be shown.



(c) Side by side with the agricultural exhibition, there should be an *animal husbandry stall* with cattle and poultry sections. In the animal husbandry stall it is better to begin with a cattle show in which animals in the project area which have been improved could be kept. The prize winning animals of the Block, i.e. those which have won prizes at cattle shows organised in various places, should be shown in special enclosures. If the area happens to be the home of some important cattle breed, naturally those breeds should be brought in.

In the educative section of the cattle show the methods, by which the animal diseases which are rampant in the area could be removed, medicines and vaccines that are used for the purpose and the sources from which they could be obtained, should be clearly demonstrated. As an idea, artificial insemination has been accepted all over India and in many places such centres have been started. The utility of artificial insemination, specially because of the paucity of good bulls should be popularised and wherever possible, the animal husbandry pavilion should exhibit equipments for artificial insemination and explain its benefits to the people. Animals produced through artificial insemination, if any in the area, should be kept as exhibits in the pavilion.

(d) Along with the cattle show, exhibitions of other aspects of animal husbandry activities like poultry, bee-keeping, keeping of goats and sheep should be organized. For hatching eggs incubators are being used in many places. It is not yet available everywhere but its utility is now generally acknowledged all over. The idea of incubators could be popularised. Some of the birds which have been hatched out of the incubator could also be shown. Similar developmental activity should be shown for breeding of sheep and goats.

*Health Pavilion.*—Apart from showing different aspects of health activities, a model should be displayed showing improved houses, paved streets and



drains, improved wells, sanitary services, etc. The houses should give evidence of doors and windows, smokeless choolas and other renovations and improvements that are being made under the housing programme. Similarly in all other spheres the types that will be shown should be of the improved variety. Other exhibits in the Health pavilion should be of audio-visual type. They should cover the common types of infectious diseases and the methods of getting rid of them, the benefits of inoculation, the need for environmental sanitation, etc.

What are the "don'ts" for healthy community living? These should be demonstrated and their adverse effects brought out. Simultaneously, the "do's" should be emphasised and demonstrated and their beneficial effects brought out. In other words, the health pavilion should contain models and exhibits showing the contrast between the bad and the good and if it could be brought out in a tell-tale fashion it will cause some impression on the villagers.

*Education Pavilion.*—This should show basic and adult education centres and give an idea of the arts and crafts that are taught in basic education centres. In miniature, children's play-grounds and parks should be exhibited and in order to attract the youngsters the Children's Section should have a sprinkling of colours in the exhibits. The modern aids to education, particularly for adult education should be exhibited and the facilities that are available to the people for taking advantage of the adult literacy campaign should be brought out in attractive form. The progress that has been made in the project area in this field naturally should be brought out. In fact, in all pavilions there must be sections to show what the project in which the mela is being held has achieved in the sphere of implementation of the Community Development Programme.

*Arts and Crafts.*—The local industries and the improvements that have been made must be brought out prominently. The training which is being given to



artisans in the community project areas should be depicted and how villagers can take advantage of these training facilities should be explained. Small industries of the area which are being improved could be operated in the Exhibition so that the villagers could see at first hand the improved methods. The economies of the programme must also be explained verbally as well as by figures and charts. A small Cottage Industries Emporium could also be set up and the goods put up for sale.

*Cooperation.*—The spheres in which cooperation is being applied should be brought out. The idea of multi-purpose cooperative societies and how they function should be brought out through literature as well as models and charts. Details of information about the progress of cooperative movement in the project area must be exhibited and the benefits of producer-cum-consumer societies explained.

Other aspects of community development activities covering recreation, sports, etc. could be actually organised as part of the mela programme.

*A Model Village.*—Finally every Mela Committee should attempt to have a model, nearly 20'  $\times$  20' in which all aspects of community project activities should be depicted. With a model village in the centre and with fields all around this model can show :

- (a) improved village houses,
- (b) model farms,
- (c) improved stocks of cattle,
- (d) better sanitary services like paved streets and drainage, improved wells, ponds,
- (e) irrigation channels,
- (f) small industries,
- (g) community centres, panchayats,



- (h) village roads linked up with the main road leading to the metropolis.
- (i) village grazing grounds,
- (j) school with play-grounds.

In other words, this model would be symbolic of the activities in the Community Development Programme in a fairly concentrated compass. The model, if possible, should be illuminated and apart from having special cards indicating the various types of improvements fixed at different parts of the model, running commentary and explanation should be given by competent persons. The narrator would go on switching from one section to the other and keep on explaining. The model should be well-protected and a barrier should be made with a narrow passage allowing two people to move abreast so that people could enter from one side and go out of the other.



# PROPOSED LAY-OUT MODEL



DESIGNED BY  
*Atul K. Sharma*  
 ARTIST



# MODEL VILLAGE





## CHAPTER III

### ROLE OF OFFICIALS AND NON-OFFICIALS

The Extension contents of the mela given in the earlier chapter would indicate the importance of governmental participation in a mela of this kind. While the organisation of the Mela should be in the hands of the Mela Committee, the Extension activities depicted in the Mela should be directly supervised by the Departments concerned and the project authorities. They should ensure that this part of the programme which is essentially of an educative and instructive character is imaginatively and forcefully brought out. In fact, the more complicated charts and models that have been suggested should be prepared under the auspices of the district and the State authorities and these could be lent to project areas as and when melas take place in those areas. Thus, by having comparatively less number of models and charts it should be possible to feed all project areas. Timing of the different project melas should be made in such a way that each mela gets the fullest benefit of the combined resources of the district instead of depending on its own resources alone.

Other sections of the mela should, as far as possible, be left to the non-official resources entirely subject to a certain overall guidance by the administrative authorities. This guidance should be exercised not with a view to curbing any of the local activities but rather to promote and improve such activities. An imaginative approach by the project officer as well as by the Tehsil or the sub-divisional authorities is most essential to ensure that people's efforts are directed on proper lines and such efforts are supplemented by Government initiative, guidance and assistance.

*Police Arrangements.*—It is the duty of the authorities of law and order to see that wherever large crowds of people gather a certain order is maintained.



The police authorities should be informed in advance and the arrangements that they would like to make should be made known to the Mela Committee. In fact, the Police Inspector-in-charge of the area should be a member of the Mela Committee. While the police will look after law and order, it does not give a good impression if a large number of policemen appear to be controlling the crowd as thereby the mela becomes an official show. At the same time, it is essential that they are there to impart a sense of security to the people and also be available in emergency. In other words, the police should function as a stand-by. The administration of the mela, as far as possible, should be under the civil volunteer corps and the police will assist when called upon to do so.

*Healthy Entertainment.*—It has been stated in the earlier chapters that the entertainment part of the mela is very important. It can hardly be emphasised. The only thing that one has got to keep in view is that such entertainment is of the healthy type. Gambling houses or drinking booths naturally cannot be tolerated. In the entertainment programme one should ensure that development dramas, development songs, films, etc., are judiciously put in. Mushairas, puppet shows, folk dances, rural orchestra and other activities of a recreational character ought to be popularised. Magicians and snake charmers and others will join in on their own. Facilities are hardly necessary to be provided to them but they need not be thrown out.

Whenever fairs are held around a place of historical and/or religious interest, efforts might be made, as a part of the recreational programme, to impart true knowledge of history and to interpret mythology in the context of Vikas Yojna where such a treatment is justified.

*Publicity.*—Holding of a mela requires advance publicity, in order to be successful. Since the Mela Committee contains representatives of the sarpanches



of the villages in the block, it should be the duty of the sarpanches to inform the people of their area and to ensure that the mela is not only patronised by the people but the traders, businessmen and others also participate. Permission for such participation will naturally be given by the Mela Committee. The publicity agencies which are functioning in the areas, e.g. the Field Publicity Organisation of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting of the Government of India and the Field Publicity Organisations of the State Governments, should be informed well in advance of the decision to hold melas and they will also put the word across. For organising a big mela it might be advantageous to have a representative of the Publicity Department in the Mela Committee so that he could take charge of publicity.



## CHAPTER IV

### DISTRICT MELAS

We have so far talked of the project Mela. Occasionally melas on a larger scale than that of a project mela could be profitably organised at the District level. The principles and the lines of approach for such melas are likely to be the same as in the case of the project melas but since the size is bigger, the mela premises and the arrangements, etc. should be contemplated on a bigger scale. In a District Mela, the District Planning Committee together with the District Heads of Development Departments may suitably function as the Mela Committee. Other members for example, non-official representatives of the area in which the mela is being organised, could be co-opted. The District Mela Committee should be presided over by the Deputy Commissioner of the district.

In regard to all other arrangements the pattern given for the project Mela could be followed, on a *bigger scale*.



## CHAPTER V

### THE BIG FAIRS

Fairs like those at Sonapur or Nauchandi (Meerut) or in religious places like Kurukshetra, Gangasagar and Hardwar are traditional fairs having their own pattern. In such places, big townships sprout overnight and millions of people gather. Organisational aspects of such melas are left to the district and other Governmental authorities concerned with them.

It is not the purpose of this pamphlet to deal with the organisation of these fairs except to indicate that the occasion should be taken advantage of by the project authorities to propagate the message of the Community Development Programme. Already project authorities are participating in these fairs with useful results. To ensure that such participation becomes really effective, it would be desirable if the Project Executive Officer of the place where the Mela is held is included in the Mela Committee.

A comprehensive programme of exhibition as well as demonstration of Community Project activities should be drawn up. In these exhibitions the various aspects of the Community Development Programme must find a place. This should be decided in consultation with the Departments concerned, for example, agriculture, animal husbandry, health, education, cottage industries, communications, etc. In addition, all audio-visual aids for dissemination of the idea of the Community Development Programme should be made available and the message conveyed through development songs, development dramas and through the establishment of information centres containing charts, pictures and posters on the programme. Similarly, serious programmes can also be introduced if properly



organised, e.g. social or cultural programmes can be introduced along with group-discussions of villagers. Perhaps in such discussions the majority may not participate but if suitably organised it is possible that some of the more serious types of people, who are perhaps leaders in their own areas, may find the programme interesting.



*August* 1956.

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PRINTED IN INDIA BY THE MANAGER  
GOVT. OF INDIA PRESS, NASIK ROAD