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# RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Through

SELF-HELP

24, 16, 19

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2056

*Issued by :*

COMMUNITY PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

PLANNING COMMISSION

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Reprint of the Original Book published by U. P. Government in 1939.





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# RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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## FOREWORD

(For reprint of Dr. Katju's pamphlet entitled "*Rural Development Through Self-help*")

It gives me special pleasure to write a foreword for the reprint of this pamphlet, because just at the time when it was first printed, I came in close contact with Dr. Katju regarding rural development in Uttar Pradesh.

This reprint is being brought out by the Community Projects Administration, for the benefit of their workers throughout the country, for whom it should prove a very interesting and helpful guide. While reading it the workers should bear in mind the fact that Dr. Katju has had very long experience of the conditions prevailing in villages, and that his legal practice in the past brought him into intimate contact with rural life and problems.

It will be seen that though the pamphlet was written as far as 1939 it visualizes a programme and puts forward suggestions closely resembling in many ways the outer form of the present Community Projects. I say *outer form*, because in its inner difference, namely, that Dr. Katju lays great stress on the need for the villagers to become self-sufficient, through their own hand-labour, in their vital requirements, and the desirability for them not to sell away their products for money in order to buy inferior factory made goods, but only to sell their surplus produce for obtaining cash for the purchase of a few useful commodities, whereas the Community Projects programme is somewhat orientated towards cities and mechanization. I believe this orientation of the Community Projects is gradually shifting, and must perforce shift more and more towards the ideal of internal self-sufficient economy of village life otherwise unemployment and dangerous inequalities of life and status will begin to develop, bringing along with them disappointment and discontent in the villages. I would, therefore, specially commend to the Community Project workers a close study of Dr. Katju's remarks and suggestions in this respect.

Another interesting passage is the one on *Panchayats*. We all know that the present *Panchayat* system is not everywhere working as smoothly as had been hoped. I think the suggestions that Dr. Katju put down in this pamphlet in 1939 are well worth reconsideration, especially with regard to the retention of the natural unit of the family and the village in the representational system. The Community Project areas are places where experiments in this direction could very well be carried out. The success of rural development depends largely on the question of *Panchayat* organization, and the matter is such a difficult and vital one that it needs and deserves free, open-minded experimentation in various methods.



Next in importance to the *Panchayats* comes the question of co-operative farming. Personally I have no doubt in my mind but that the second of the two methods suggested by Dr. Katju is the more suited to Indian conditions. Here again various experiments can well be carried out in the Community Project areas. It will be a tragic loss of a unique opportunity if fullest advantage is not taken of the Community Projects for carrying out a variety of experiments in all matters connected with rural development.

Dr. Katju also touches on many other pertinent matters, such as co-operative arrangements for assistance to villagers who fall sick; the desirability of a village charity-box; the problem of obtaining enough ground in suitable places for compost-pits, and so forth. All these problems continually face one in the villages, and Dr. Katju has dealt with them in a sympathetic and practical manner, as the reader will see for himself.

Everyone of us should approach this vast problem of India's villages with the zeal, thoroughness and open-mindedness of true scientists, who are ever learning. This is what Bapuji did up to the end of his life. Let us all be students—humble-minded and earnest. The Community Projects will then develop into the most valuable of all schools, the "School of Experience", in which we can all learn and become wiser.

Gopal Ashram,  
Tehri-Garhwal,  
12th March 1953.

MIRA BEHN



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-HELP

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**The Meaning and the Goal.**—From the outset it is essential to understand what we exactly mean by rural development and what is the goal that we have in view. It is not merely the economic development of the village that we have in mind; we aim at something much more important. With the advent of self-government, and of popular ministries based on the will of the people who live mainly in the villages, we want the villagers to be alive to the important and vital part which they have to play in the Government of their own province; and we want them to fit themselves for the task by making themselves strong in body and mind and by learning the habit of acting through well-built and active village organizations. Every villager should understand that his village is a link in a chain of over a lakh of villages in the province. We want the villagers to make every link of this chain as firm as steel so that the chain may neither bend nor break, no matter to what pressure it may be subjected. We want the villagers to make the village a living unit in this mighty organization of an Indian nation. We want the villagers of each village to attain their own salvation through co-operative effort in all directions. My endeavour shall be now in the following pages to indicate how they should set about to achieve this high end.

**The Village Community.**—The first step before any actual work of rural development is taken in hand is to form an organization which will include the whole village community in its ambit. It has often been said that the village *Panchayat* is an ancient institution of India and that while kings have come and gone and kingdoms have been established and then have fallen into decay, the village community remained intact and the village continued as a complete entity in itself. Unfortunately owing to the establishment of the British Government with its central administrative, executive and judicial institutions at headquarters, the village community in many places has gradually disintegrated. Even then there still remain many ties which bind the residents in the village most closely.

**Better-Living Societies.**—In our rural development scheme great stress is laid upon this organization of the whole village into one unit. Government has suggested the formation of Better-Living Societies embracing 75 per cent. of the adult male population of the village as a desirable thing. There is no charm in the phrase "Better-Living Society". So long as we get the substance, it does not matter what the name is. We have suggested "Better-Living Society" because it can easily fit in under our existing rules and can be formed without difficulty and with only nominal expenditure. It can function on a defined basis and will teach the villager the lesson of acting as part of an organization and the value of rules and procedure for conducting business in an orderly way.

Apart from the name and the form, the substance is that the villagers should come together and acting in concert should be persuaded to take continuous interest in the management of their local affairs. The aim should be for all male (and if possible even female) adults to join the organization. If that be not found feasible, at least one adult of each family residing in the village should become a member of the village society. In



our villages the family is still considered to be a unit and can easily function efficiently as a part and parcel of a village society. The great advantage of treating the family as a unit is that it is something which the villagers are familiar with and secondly, it will keep the membership of a society within reasonable and manageable limits. The latter is an important consideration. Our aim is that every family living in the village, of every caste, whether high or low, should have a share and a voice in the administration of local affairs. And in this society all communities and castes will be represented. The size of the society will be quite manageable. An ordinary village contains between 100—200 families and a society with a membership of 100—200 persons can easily be depended upon to know the local needs and how to provide for them. This will give an opportunity to every family in the village to come together and become part of one entire whole.

**Panchayats.**—This society should elect annually a *sirpanch*. The society should divide its various activities under different heads, such as village sanitation, village water supply, village sports, village volunteers, etc., and elect a member and put him (with a small sub-committee) in charge of each one of these activities. All these heads of different sub-committees with the *sirpanch* should form a working committee of the whole society. The villagers know full well that there are always some people in the village, irrespective of their caste or creed, who come up to the top simply by the force of their character. It is to them that people turn for guidance. These are the natural *panches* of the people and when families are asked to elect *panches* it will be this type of people who would be selected. This working committee, if members so desire, may be called a *Panchayat*. It is presumed that on this working committee again all castes and creeds will be represented. As a matter of fact, in numerous village in every part of the province I have found *Panchayats* consisting of Hindus and Muslims; and Harijans have also been represented on these *Panchayats* and they have mixed with other *panches* on absolutely equal terms. The working committee or the *Panchayat* will carry out all decisions of the society. The *Panchayat* will not be like a small notified area committee, where the people in the notified area simply elect the members once in every three years or so, and the administration of the notified area is left to the members of the committee. Here it will be the society which means all families in the village which will decide the policy by which the affairs of the village are to be regulated, leaving the execution thereof to the *sirpanch* and his colleagues.

This plan has a further merit. Inasmuch as the village society retains the power in its own hands, there is no question of any canvassing for election. The *panches* will be selected because of the respect and esteem in which they are held by the villagers as a whole. But they will be continuously answerable to the society. They can be easily questioned at every monthly meeting of the society about any acts done by them.

Election and canvassing produce parties and parties lead to friction and rivalry. Here it is hoped that the whole organization will be built up on a base of mutual co-operation and trust. Every family will have an opportunity of having its say and will feel satisfied, and peace and harmony and a spirit of good fellowship in the village will be fostered.

The formation of the society is a task peculiarly for the villagers themselves. They will be assisted no doubt by the Rural Development Organizers and by the officials of the Co-operative Department. But ultimately it is for them to take necessary action for organizing themselves.



**Subscription.**—The annual fee for a member of such a society is a nominal one. It is generally four annas a year. In many villages, however, I have found that four annas is considered to be the minimum fee. Sometimes for the poorer families in the village, and particularly for the Harijans, the fee is reduced even to two annas; in deserving cases it may be as little as even one anna. It is the tie which matters and not the fee. At the same time, villagers who are better off than their other brethren should be requested to contribute a little more than four annas as their annual subscription. In some villages I have found the subscription to be as much as one rupee; and in many places some members have contributed even more. This annual contribution will give the society just a few rupees as the nucleus of their fund. The funds can be increased later by subscription for special purposes and Government grants and also by contributions in grain at harvest time.

It is essential that the *panches*, particularly the *sirpanch* should be men, and wherever possible, even women with zeal and passion for the service of their fellow-villagers. Wherever possible an energetic young man may be appointed as secretary of the society and also of the *Panchayat*. This secretary should also be a man of active habits and full of love for his fellow-villagers. The *sirpanch* and members of the working committee and the secretary should be above village politics and should not take part in any village factions. This is necessary, so that every family may be able to put implicit trust in his *panches* and the secretary.

**Gaon Panchayat Legislation.**—There are proposals before Government to establish *Gaon Panchayats* in all the villages in the province. When such legislation is passed then *Gaon Panchayats* will be formed which might in the case of smaller villages consist of all adults in the village and in the case of bigger villages with a population up to 2,000 or so, of representatives of all the families in the village. These *Gaon Panchayats* will be governed by law and will have statutory powers for administration of the village affairs and for raising funds more or less on the lines on which our Better-Living Societies are intended to function. But the basis of the proposed *Gaon Panchayat* is the same as we have in our Better-Living Society, *viz.*, that all residents of the village, man and woman, should take an active interest in the administration of village affairs and in bringing about improvement in the village. This legislation will give great help to the villages; but we need not wait for the passing of such legislation. Villagers everywhere can immediately take in hand the formation of Better-Living Societies in their villages. When the *Gaon Panchayat* legislation is passed, then the Better-Living Societies can easily be transformed into *Gaon Panchayat* under the *Gaon Panchayat Act*. I am glad to say that very encouraging reports are being received every month showing that people have begun to recognize the great advantages which accrue from the formation of Better-Living Societies on this village-wide scale. Better-Living Societies are being formed in every district in large numbers.

**Panchayat-Ghar.**—When a village society—I thereby refer to a Better-Living Society—has been formed, the next step should be to build a good *Panchayat-Ghar*. I regard a *Panchayat-Ghar* as the very pivot of the whole rural development plan. A *Panchayat-Ghar* does not merely mean a building where villagers can come together and meet and discuss village topics. It is much more than this. It should be a living monument and symbol of village unity and organization and the centre of all village activities. It should inspire every resident of the village—man,



woman and child—as an embodiment of their corporate life. It is therefore essential that every family in the village should contribute in some shape or form, in cash or in kind or labour, towards the construction of the *Panchayat-Ghar*. A poor widow may contribute her mite, while a well-to-do farmer or a zamindar may make a free gift of land or contribute a fairly large sum in cash. No matter what the contribution is, every one must feel that it is not the gift of any particular individual or individuals to the village, but that it is something which owes its existence to corporate action on the part of the villagers. Government will of course make a grant for the construction of the *Panchayat-Ghar*, but it is really an affair of the village itself.

The situation of the *Panchayat-Ghar* is also a very important matter. Where should it be located? In some villages I have noticed that it has been built in the centre of the village. This is of course a matter for the villagers to decide for themselves; but I would suggest that the *Panchayat-Ghar* should be built on the outskirts of the village, so that it may have a good compound attached to it. It is necessary that the *Panchayat-Ghar* should have an open space all round. If such open space is available in the centre of the village well and good; otherwise, outskirts of the village, not very far from the village, would appear to be the most suitable place.

**A Model Panchayat-Ghar.**—The ideal *Panchayat-Ghar* would be a fairly large building. There should be a meeting room; there should be smaller rooms for a library and reading room, for keeping the medicine chest and the veterinary medicine chest; for a Kanya Pathshala and for a seed store. If the village organization expands we would require further extension of the *Panchayat-Ghar*; and when constructing a *Panchayat-Ghar* care should be taken not to lose sight of the possibility of such expansion.

There should be a *chabutra*, *pucca* or *kachcha* does not matter, in front of the *Panchayat-Ghar* for use in summer. There should be a *phulwari* in a part of the compound. In many villages I have seen *Panchayat-Ghars* constructed close to a good well and that has saved the villagers the trouble of sinking a well in the *Panchayat-Ghar* compound. If no such well is nearby, then a well should also be sunk. Then there should be an *akhara*, a little gymnasium with parallel bars and horizontal bars and a ground for playing all sorts of village games and sports.

The construction of a *Panchayat-Ghar* by the co-operative effort of villagers is the ideal to be striven for; but in many villages owing to various causes it may not be possible to build a *Panchayat-Ghar* at once. In such cases if there is a school housed in the village it can be conveniently utilized as a centre for village activities. It may also be possible for the village Better-Living Society to take over the school building from the Education Department or the District Board authorities as the case may be, and instead of constructing a completely new *Panchayat-Ghar*, to alter and add to the school building so that it may be used as a *Panchayat-Ghar* and for school purposes also. That will save some money and will also enable the villagers to have a comparatively big building. I imagine the Education Department as well as the District Board authorities will be prepared to entertain a proposal for the transfer of the existing school building to the village Better-Living Society for all purposes of the village community, provided of course that the Education Department were satisfied that the building would even after the transfer, be allowed to be continued to be used for school purposes. This arrangement would be beneficial to all parties concerned. The society may add one or more rooms to the existing



school building for a seed store and a reading room and library, for keeping a medicine chest and other necessary purposes. The society may also construct a *chabutra* if necessary in the school compound. The construction of this additional accommodation will, I imagine, produce that sense of ownership of the building in every member of the village community which a *Panchayat-Ghar* is designed to produce. The school building is in one sense national property and therefore the transfer of the school building to the village society should not be treated as on a par with the gift of a building by a private owner. There should be no hesitation on the part of the village society in accepting the transfer of the school building to the society. With some additional expenditure the school building can easily be converted into a substantial structure. Most of these school buildings have already got compounds, and the building after re-modelling and alteration may well serve as a model *Panchayat-Ghar*.

The Education Department as well as the District Board would, I imagine, readily consider requests for such transfer, because it would relieve the Department and the Board of the obligation of periodical repairs to the building, and the Better-Living Society may well take that burden upon its own shoulders.

The *Panchayat-Ghar* should be in constant use. Instead of talking in front of *chaupals* the villagers should resort in the evening to their *Panchayat-Ghar* for social purposes. All festivals should be celebrated in *Panchayat-Ghars* and if necessary guests of the village should be accommodated there. Even *barats* may also be lodged there. The more you make the *Panchayat-Ghar* attractive and a living centre of the village life the more will be felt its beneficent effects on the life of the villagers.

*Panchayat-Ghars* have been constructed by the villagers practically in each district. In some districts great progress has been made; in others less. I think the Fyzabad District has built the largest number of *Panchayat-Ghars*. Mr. Randhawa, I.C.S., Joint Magistrate, was Secretary of the Fyzabad District Rural Development Association. He is an enthusiastic worker in the cause of rural development and believes fervently in the beneficent influences which flow from a *Panchayat-Ghar* for the betterment of the village community. He has written at length about *Panchayat-Ghars* and I commend his article to the notice of my readers.

We have now reached a stage when the village has got a Better-Living Society and a habitation of its own. The question is: What should the villagers do in order to improve themselves and to improve their village and their environments?

**Environments.**—There are many needs, and I realize that for meeting these needs money will be required. But I am convinced that the problem is not so much of money as of men. In our villages we have enormous man-power. The villagers are however poor and they cannot raise large sums of money among themselves. But their number is large and by dint of their labour they can do a lot. And in these pages I am mentioning what the villagers can do themselves without much expense. Take for instance village sanitation. The villagers have now come to realize the great advantages to their health and the great benefits which properly-dug manure pits confer upon them. Therefore, each family should at once proceed to have a manure pit of its own; so also a soakage pit. I am aware that in many villages villagers experience difficulty in securing land for constructing manure pits of their own, but I do hope that zamindars would everywhere assist the villagers in constructing these



manure pits and wherever the difficulties cannot be solved by amicable arrangement perhaps the *Gaon Panchayat* legislation would give powers to the *Gaon Panchayat* to acquire land for manure pits, widening of village paths and such other purposes by compulsory process.

Then again village lanes have been encroached upon and have become narrower and narrower. The society should take steps to see that the lanes are widened and made passable wherever feasible for village carts. Some villages are able to employ a sweeper, but where such employment is not possible I would suggest that the villagers should set apart a day in a month or in every fortnight for general clean-up of the village. I have seen during my visits the villages look the very picture of cleanliness and tidiness and I have learnt that it was all done by the villagers as a mark of affection for me. That can be repeated regularly once every month at least. Let every villager clean his house and his lanes once every month. The removal of filth and dirt and the widening of lanes will by themselves make a tremendous difference to the health of the villagers. Our villages have plenty of sun and fresh air and it is only filth and night-soil that makes their condition bad. Matter in wrong place is dirt, and therefore the villager should see that nothing is out of place. The proper place for dung as well as human ordure is in the dung-hill or in the area set apart for trenching. The proper place for *kachra* is not the street but the refuse-bin. From the latter compost can be made which is a better manure than even some of the costly ones. The example of China is before us. They make use of every material thrown away as waste in rural economy. They know that muck in right place is wealth.

**Drinking Water.**—The next problem is the supply of pure water for drinking purposes. I know that in many parts of the province there is great scarcity of such water. In Bundelkhand particularly wells are very scarce; and these should be sunk there in large numbers. Elsewhere the number of existing wells in the villages seems to be more or less adequate for local needs. What is necessary is the repairing of these wells. This can be done by the society by having just a little subscription. This is a good object for the generosity of the well-to-do people in the village. It is a welcome sign that the repair of wells in the *abadi* is always considered important. The society will of course ensure that there may be one or two wells, particularly in the Harijan quarters of the village. The villagers should also beautify their villages and their homes. There are hundreds of simple ways in which real beauty can be achieved. It is by no means a costly affair. The most unsightly things in the village are the houses in ruins. I do not know why there are so many *khandars* in every village. It is probably considered inauspicious to build another house on the foundations of one which has fallen. These *khandars* multiply. A *khandar* is not only unsightly, but it is generally treated as a dust-bin, and is used for filth. I would therefore strongly suggest that whenever possible *khandars* should be levelled and if water is available in the neighbourhood the owner of the *khandar* or persons living in the neighbourhood should be requested to plant some flowering shrubs such as *gainda* and *gulab*, and also *tulsi* plants on the *khandars*. In many villages I have seen that this has been done and the village has been enriched by a very large number of pretty-looking small *phulwaris*.

Then there is the village tank edges of which are generally broken up and the slopes are kept dirty and sometimes filthy also. In many villages, the villagers by means of a little earth-work have converted the village



tank into an ornamental sheet of water. The practicability of doing so should be considered everywhere.

There are many other measures for keeping the village tidy. I will not enumerate all of them. Wherever possible cattle should not be tied in the house but in a separate cattle shed, and round about there should be a "mundale" with dry leaves scattered upon the earth and with a little soakage pit attached to it so that the neighbourhood may not be made dirty by the cattle and there may not be flies round about it.

All this would require much more of labour than money and more of voluntary and disciplined effort than compulsion. As I have suggested, one day in a month should be set apart for cleaning the village and in the campaign on the appointed day everybody in the village should take part in some useful way. That is the practice followed in other countries also.

I have been talking of sanitary and hygienic improvement of the village. With this is closely connected the distribution of medicines. In some villages there is a Vaid or a Hakim; in many there is none and people suffer very much for want of proper medical relief. Government generally provides medicine chests, but I know that the number of medicine chests is not adequate, and that owing to lack of funds it is not possible to replenish these chests as often as it should be done. There is so much demand for medicines for common ailments that our medicine chests are soon exhausted and require replenishing at short intervals, and this is not generally done because the Rural Development Association has not got sufficient funds. Here again I would suggest that the villagers should in a way help themselves. I have already said that medicine chests should be placed in the *Panchayat-Ghar* and at stated hours some member of the *Panchayat* or the secretary should be there to distribute medicines. No one living in the village should be turned away. Everyone should be considered entitled to avail himself of the medicine chest, but it should be remembered at the same time that the medicine chest is meant for the poorest people in the village and if a well-to-do person in the village takes some medicine for himself out of the chest to that extent he may be depriving some one of his poor brethren of the benefit of medical relief. It would not be proper to sell any medicine. It should never be done; nor would it be proper to ask any one for contribution on account of the medicine which he may require. But I consider that the provision of medical relief for the villagers should be considered by every villager to be a very proper object of his bounty and his support.

**Village Charity Box.**—I suggest that in every *Panchayat-Ghar* in a corner there should be kept a charity box for medicines so that any one, if he chooses to, may drop an anna or two in that box. I would expect every one who takes medicine from the medicine chest for his own purpose and who can pay for it, to drop a pice or so in the charity box. Similarly, when there is a feast or marriage or some festivity in the family, people may be asked to drop something in the charity box. The aim should be that when the medicine chest becomes empty and it becomes necessary to replenish it, then sufficient money should be forthcoming from the charity box to meet the expenses of replenishing it. I suggest that the charity box should be properly locked and it should be opened once a week or once a fortnight at a stated time in the presence of as large a number of villagers as may be possible, and the amount found in the box should, after being publicly counted, be entered in the register of the *Panchayat*, so that no one may have the least suspicion of the possibility of embezzlement of the



funds so collected by means of the charity box. The cost of replenishing the chest is, I think Rs. 6 or a little more, and I think that the amount collected in the charity box and the Government grant under this head should enable the villager to have always a steady supply of medicines for the residents of the village.

I should like to make one more suggestion. Many poor people fall seriously ill in a village. Ordinary medicines are no good to them; they require skilful medical treatment. But they cannot leave the village as there is nobody to look after them or to take them to hospital or to bring medicine for them from the dispensary. If the man and his wife go away to hospital there will be no one to look after their children or their small fields. I think the society should consider it to be one of its duties to make suitable arrangements for the medical relief of such people. If necessary, some one on behalf of the society should escort the sick man to the hospital and the society should in his absence make suitable arrangements for the protection and support of his family and for the cultivation of his land.

**Physical Culture.**—I have touched upon the question of physical culture already and mentioned that the *Panchayat-Ghar* should have *akharas*, gymnasiums, etc. There are village games, but at the present moment they are unorganized. The *Panchayat-Ghar* should be an instrument for the organization of such village games and sports. *Akharas* should be a regular feature and *dangals* and sports should be regularly arranged. It does not require any money but just a little organized effort. With sports goes a little music and entertainment. *Bhajan mandalis* are becoming quite common. They should also be encouraged, and the *Panchayats* should make arrangements for entertainments of a simple nature. I have attended open air *nataks* in several villages. Our ancient village "Folk dances" are a delightful institution and deserve revival and encouragement.

**Scouts and Volunteers.**—The organization of scouts and volunteers in every village is also essential, not merely because it leads to physical improvement of those who join such an organization but also because it has numerous other social advantages. Scouting and volunteering is essentially based upon a spirit of service to the community and such a spirit ought to be developed and fostered. Then again, it teaches its members self-respect and discipline and this is of incalculable value. Above all, it inculcates a sense of perfect equality among all classes and communities in the village. Scouts and volunteers do not know any distinction of class, creed or caste. A scout and volunteer treats every other scout and volunteer as his brother. All village boys therefore should be encouraged to become scouts and volunteer bands of village adults should be formed.

**Cultural Development.**—Villagers are becoming conscious of the increasingly important part they are called upon to play in the body politic in India. To make them still more vigilant and also conscious of their rights and obligations it is necessary for them to know what is going on in India and abroad. I think every *Panchayat-Ghar* should have a newspaper and a set of books which should be freely used. Government has also installed radio sets in many centres with the same object in view.

**Rural Education.**—With this is connected most intimately the campaign against illiteracy. It is gratifying to see on all sides the keen anxiety on the part of grown-up men to become literate. In every village wherever a night school is opened illiterate adults have flocked to it in



large numbers. Such a school, I know, costs money. I suggest that there is great field for honorary work in that direction. Students coming home in vacation from their colleges and schools should take charge of these night schools. Apart from students, any permanent resident of the village who has a little time at his disposal may profitably occupy himself with social service of this description. *Panchayat-Ghar* again is a suitable place for holding such literacy classes.

**Women's Education.**—To the education of girls, even of adult women, I attach the greatest importance, even greater importance than to the literacy of adult males. These illiterate male adults have the opportunity of going out of their homes and seeing things for themselves. They go out to the village bazars, to the tehsil and district headquarters and do come to know something of the world. They may not be able to read and write, but their outlook is broadened by external contacts, but so far as womenfolk in the villages are concerned they are both ignorant and illiterate. If we are to make any progress in rural development it is absolutely essential that we must banish illiteracy and ignorance from the homes of the villagers, otherwise, much of our effort will prove to be in vain. The problem of women's education in rural areas presents stupendous difficulties. A boy or an adult male can and does go a mile or two outside his village to the day or night school; but that is not possible in the case of girls and women and therefore we must bring the school for women to the village itself. If we depend upon the District Boards or the Education Department to tackle this problem, we shall have to wait for long and appreciable progress will not be made for decades. We cannot however afford to wait and therefore must devise some measures at once for teaching girls and women in every village. This opens a wide field for honourable social service in the village. The village society should make arrangements for the education of girls wherever there is no primary school or a *pathshala* where girls may go. If there is any educated lady in the village she should look upon this as her own peculiar task and should arrange to devote an hour or so every day to give instruction in reading and writing. She may even include grown-up women. If there are several educated women in the village they can form a small society of their own—I have seen such a *Stri Samaj* in a village in the Jaunpur District. School teachers' wives would also suit very well for this purpose. If there is no educated woman, then any respected old man in the village such as a Pandit or a Maulvi or any other resident, may be asked to take charge of the *Kanya Pathshala* for the love of the village.

The school master in the village community occupies a very important role and he can, if he is so inclined, do a lot of useful service to his fellow villagers. The daily routine of his school only takes a fractional part of his time. His leisure he can probably utilize in serving the village society as well as its *Panchayat*. He and his wife can render most useful services by arranging for the primary education of the girls of the village and by opening adult schools for women. The school master can assist the society and the *Panchayat* by being its true friend, philosopher and guide. The society may, wherever necessary, give a small allowance to the school master and his wife.

I am making these suggestions on the supposition that it will not be possible, at least in the beginning, for a Better-Living Society to employ a teacher on some salary, though I think that an allowance of Rs. 2-4 should prove ample and attractive to suitable agency for this purpose.



Whatever be the method adopted, the subject is of enormous importance and should never be lost sight of.

**Temperance and Prohibition.**—I regard it as a duty of the village society to promote not merely temperance but abstinence from liquor and drugs on the part of the villagers. We are determined to rid the province of this great evil of drink and drugs. Prohibition is the declared policy of Government but apart from prohibition I think that it is the primary duty of the village societies themselves to make their members abstain from drink and drugs. They should take steps by voluntary effort and persuasion to stop illicit distillation and smuggling from other villages. This requires no money. It is only a question of building up of sound public opinion in the village against these anti-social acts. There is not much of drinking in our villages; it is only to be found among some particular communities, particularly among Harijans; and the Better-Living Societies should encourage *Harijans Panchayats* to take active steps to check this evil. If these village societies take active interest in this matter, then the ground would soon be prepared for the introduction of complete prohibition throughout the province.

**Economic Development.**—Our villagers are poor and the question is: What can the villagers do themselves to improve their economic condition and to earn a little more money for themselves? Here again before we proceed we must bear in mind some points which have far-reaching consequences. Ours is an agricultural country. Our villagers rely mainly on agriculture. They have very few supplementary sources of income. If the crop is a good one, then the cultivator in the village has an easy time of it, but if the crops fail for any reason either owing to drought or excessive rainfall or frost or hail-storm, then the cultivator is ruined. His holding is a small one, and the small fields comprising the holding are also scattered all over the village. The result is that he cannot cultivate the fields properly. His agricultural implements are not also efficient; his bullocks are ill-fed; his cattle are of inferior breed; he cannot maintain them properly, and the result is poverty all round. We cannot improve the economic condition of the villager unless and until we increase the quantity of agricultural produce as well as its quality and unless manage to secure good prices for this produce by proper marketing. These are the basic requirements. And I will show that all these three things can be achieved by the villagers themselves, by their own efforts, by simply acting in co-operation with each other.

At the outset I should like to emphasize that Government maintains a big Agricultural Department and an Industries Department whose sole object is to help the agriculturist in his agricultural operations and in the development of his cottage industries. We employ highly competent and qualified men in the Agricultural Department. They know improved methods of agriculture. As I have already said, there are now nearly 600 seed stores in the province and we propose to establish many more. For each seed store there is a supervisor and under him there are *kamdars* and their duty is to assist the cultivator in cultivating his fields on improved lines and to advise him all along. If these public servants do not do their duty then they are to be blamed and they can, if need be, censured; but it is upto the villagers to take full advantage of all expert assistance which Government has provided for them. If the cultivators themselves still stick to their old ways and will not try to improve themselves by adopting new methods, then the fault will be theirs and not of the Government.



**Consolidation of Holdings and Co-operative Farming.**—The very first point that I wish to take is that of better farming. It is obvious that the cultivation of small plots scattered here and there in the villages by a cultivator assisted by his wife and children can never be profitable. It can never yield good or adequate produce. I need not enlarge upon this subject. It is so obvious. We must therefore have recourse to consolidation of holdings (*chakbandi*) and co-operative farming. These are two distinct things. The object of *chakbandi* is merely to consolidate the scattered plots of a tenant into one or more compact plots so that he may be able to cultivate all his land with the greatest efficiency. And a law about *chakbandi* has now been passed. But then sometimes it is impossible to consolidate an entire holding into one such plot. The fields of the holding may vary in quality and in soil. Therefore, two or more groupings may be necessary. Then again there is always a tendency for the holding to split up again and again owing to succession or transfer. Further, while *chakbandi* is a good thing, it does not by itself increase the wealth of the cultivator of the consolidated holding. It cannot give him improved agricultural implements or make him more wealthy. It is good so far as it goes, but it is not good enough by any means. Our villagers must go much further and must realize that the cultivation of big plots—as big at least as 10 or 20 acres—is bound to be more profitable than the cultivation of small plots. In the case of big plots you can employ more modern ploughs and other efficient agricultural implements. You can sink wells, you can make even expensive irrigation channels.

**Co-operative Farming.**—Therefore, what is necessary is that the cultivators should pool their resources so that with their joint resources they may be able to command greater credit and buy all the seed and get all the implements they require. All this they can do easily by co-operative farming. Co-operative farming means throwing all your fields in one big farm. It is practically cultivation in partnership. Just as all partners work in a shop so all partners in co-operative farming cultivate a joint farm. Clear accounts are kept and when the produce is ready it is sold jointly and the net proceeds are then divided in proportion to the share of each cultivator in the joint farm. For this purpose the cultivators can easily form a society of their own. The rules of such society need not be very complicated and can be easily framed and its affairs managed with prudence and convenience. That is one method of co-operative farming where even the lands are pooled together and tilled jointly. Before such pooling takes place an accurate map of the lands belonging to all the members of the society should be drawn up and every field of each of the members accurately delineated and demarcated on the map. Thereafter the dividing lines (*mends*) separating one field from the other should be demolished and the entire land made into one compact block and cultivated in the most suitable manner. Whenever the members of the society desire to separate from each other, they can get back possession of their lands in accordance with the boundaries marked on the map. All members of the society jointly cultivate the entire land with such energy and industry as they would devote if it all belonged to each of them separately. Any member of the society, however, who does not wish to take part in this joint cultivation and leaves the cultivation to other members of the society must make some compensation to them for their daily labour before he can be allowed to take advantage of his share in the produce of the labour. This can be done by deducting something from his share of the produce before it is allotted to him.



This is, however, a matter of detail and can be easily provided for in the rules.

There is also another method of co-operative farming. It is not so complete as the one which I have discussed above but it goes quite close to it. In this case there is no joint cultivation. Each member cultivates his own field with his own labour and is entitled exclusively to the produce of it, but he is at the same time a member of the co-operative farming society along with other cultivators in the village. This society assists and advises its members in all their agricultural operations from start to finish. It goes further and supplies the best varieties of seed, the most efficient agricultural implements and fertilizers and also arranges wherever necessary for means of irrigation, whether by wells or reservoirs, or *bandhis*, by making *nalis*, drains, etc. The society also if necessary maintains a supply of draught cattle of superior variety and bullock carts for the use of its members. It secures and places the best expert technical advice at the disposal of its members. It also decides about rotational block farming. As is well known certain classes of soil are best suited for growing certain kinds of crops, and cultivation by rotation of crops is also now recognized to be the best method of cultivation. Moreover, cultivation of compact areas with the same kind of crops ensures purity of seed and checks its deterioration. The society, therefore, by consultation among its members decides that in a particular area belonging to its members every member shall sow and raise a particular kind of crop and each member carries out the decision on his own portion of the land in that block. In this way while the cultivation is separate, all the benefits of joint cultivation are realized. When crops have been raised by individual endeavour in this fashion, then for marketing purposes the society takes them over from each member, pools the produce together and then sells it to the best advantage as I have stated above.

Some competent people consider this method of co-operative farming to be much better than the first one. They say that ordinary human nature is that one devotes the greatest possible labour and care to one's own property rather than to property which may belong to him and his partners jointly. They also say that in India having regard to our large population in the rural areas most satisfactory results can be achieved by cultivation in small lots with our existing simple agricultural implements and the use of large-scale machinery is not necessary.

It is said that, as in Japan and China, our agriculture is not an industry but a mode of living. The man shares his life with his land. The agricultural methods he follows are the methods of a gardener. What he needs, however, is machinery for his cash crops and commercial crops and most of all, he is to be made a participator in the benefits of wholesale bargaining for his produce.

**Co-operative Marketing.**—Co-operative farming therefore is the only true remedy for removing all the miseries from the villages. Co-operative farming would not only mean the raising of the produce by joint endeavour; but it would mean much more. It would also necessarily mean the marketing of joint produce in the best possible manner. The entire produce will be dealt with together. It can be easily cleaned and graded and put in sacks in the village itself. The co-operative farming and marketing society will be able to have its own stores and godowns. The purchaser of the produce, whether he be a *bania* or a man from the *mandi*, will not be able to do so by bargaining with poor small cultivators one by one



separately; he will have to deal with the society as a whole; he will be compelled to pay the highest possible price for that produce. Further, the cultivators who have become members of this co-operative farming society will not borrow separately for payment of their rent. The society can easily pay their rent for them in one lump sum. The society needs a little money for the purpose of paying this total rent before it is able to sell its produce. The society can do so by borrowing money from the co-operative bank at the lowest possible rates of interest such as eight annas per cent. per mensem. Each individual cultivator would be freed from many anxieties and worries and he may be sure of a good share at the end of the harvest. Government have examined this question most carefully and have come to the conclusion that our villagers should take to co-operative farming. Government are appointing officers who will help cultivators in forming such societies. Co-operative farming is therefore the best possible method, but even without co-operative farming the villagers can by co-operation increase their wealth if they would only act jointly.

**Better Marketing Legislation.**—I may add here that a Bill for the better marketing of agricultural produce is now pending before the United Provinces Legislative Assembly and I hope that it will soon be passed. It provides for the control and supervision of *mandis* at big centres so that all the cultivators who resort to these *mandis* for the sale of their agricultural produce may be able to get proper prices for their stuff and may not be made to pay improper charges under various heads. But as very few cultivators go direct to the *mandi* that Bill also contains provisions for the proper marketing of agricultural produce in the villages themselves where co-operative marketing societies have been established.

**Irrigation.**—Improved agriculture requires an efficient system of irrigation. I am not here concerned with canal irrigation—that is a matter for the Government—; nor with the tube-wells on an expensive scale—that again is Government's concern; but by a system of organized labour on their part the villagers can easily build a series of *bandhis* in the cultivated or culturable areas of their village for irrigation purposes. The construction of a *bandhi* does not require much money; it requires human labour, and, as I have already said, it is quite possible for the villagers to set apart a day or two in the week for "shock" work in this direction. To this organized effort every villager should make a contribution. Every one, no matter to what caste or creed he may belong, should treat it as a point of honour to do his bit of manual labour for the good of the village as a whole. In several districts, notably in the Pratabgarh District, the villagers have built miles and miles of *bandhis*, and have thus added to their comfort and wealth. Government has appointed a very able committee to investigate and report upon the whole problem of reclamation of *usar* land, of which unfortunately there is an enormous area throughout the province. It is said that about 50 lakhs of acres of *usar* land are to be found in the province. This committee will surely tell us the best method of reclaiming this land; but I understand that one of the simplest methods of reclaiming much of the culturable waste is to enclose it with *bandhis* so that water may collect thereon and gradually sink into the soil. I commend this fact to all our villagers so that they may try the experiment wherever feasible. I may add that while an expensive system of tube-wells will be outside the efforts of villagers I do not see any difficulty in the cooperative farming society endeavouring to sink one or two tube-wells in the village by its own efforts. It can raise some money from the villagers



themselves; it can obtain a small grant from the Government for the purpose and the remaining money it can raise by loan and can pay it off by a series of contributions spread over a long term of years from those who use the water of the wells for irrigating their fields. I am sure that the water raised from wells or from small reservoirs constructed by a society will be found to be less expensive than water obtained from Government canals or tube-wells.

**Roads.**—Similar remarks may be made regarding small feeder paths and lanes joining the village with the metalled or unmetalled roads. Here again the problem is not so much of money as of men. Lanes on which bullock carts can conveniently pass from the village to the roads are a necessity. Government is going to enact a law which would provide facilities for the acquisition of land for such purposes and would also enable existing paths and lanes to be widened. The construction of big roads is, of course, beyond the means of the villagers. I am referring here only to short lanes of a few furlongs in length. I have seen numerous villages where the villagers have, by organized labour on their part, made lanes for themselves and thus made it easy for their carts to travel from the village on to the public road. Government has already granted to District Boards 14 lakhs for specified new roads and has in preparation a big five-year plan for the construction of about 1,500 miles of *pucca* roads throughout the province at a cost of over Rs. 1½ crores. It is certain that these roads will prove a real boon to our villages and it is necessary that these should be fully utilized by the construction of small feeder by-paths. This the villagers can do themselves with slight assistance from the Government which will be forthcoming. Here again, if money is required the co-operative farming society can get a loan and repay it by instalments in a number of years. I am disposed to think that no money may be necessary if the villagers decide among themselves, as I know they have done in numerous villages throughout the province, to construct the new road by contributing free labour for a fixed period. Those who are unable to do manual labour can make their contribution in cash or in kind on an agreed basis. All these paths and lanes can be easily maintained by the villagers themselves by this method. The *Gaon Panchayat* legislation which is now under contemplation gives power to *Gaon Panchayats* to make arrangements for free labour by passing resolutions of their own in the *Gaon Panchayats*.

**Cattle Welfare.**—With better agriculture goes cattle welfare. Cattle are the villagers' real wealth. I have already touched briefly upon this subject. Here again our villager because of his slender resources is not able to look after his cattle properly. One of the saddest sights in a village, particularly in the eastern districts, are the lean, thin and dwarf cattle. Cows yield little milk; bullocks are of inferior breed, scrub bulls roam at large in the village, and the result is that the breed is deteriorating day by day. Our villagers spend in the aggregate crores of rupees every year in the purchase of bullocks and because of the inferior breed and sickness these die early and thereby the villagers collectively suffer immense loss. Here again the villagers by acting jointly through a co-operative society can without much expense improve the condition of their cattle. A co-operative society can maintain a pedigree bull in the village. It can also make arrangements for the castration of scrub bulls. It can maintain and make arrangements for the distribution of simple medicines for cattle diseases and if any cattle epidemic breaks out it can make swift arrangements for dealing with it.



I should like once again to emphasize here as strongly as I can and to bring it home to all villagers that Government maintains at heavy cost a Veterinary Department as well as an Agriculture Department solely for their benefit. It is the duty of the officers, high and low, of these two Departments to serve the villagers. Government of course expects the officers of these two Departments to do their duty; but here I want to stress that it is to the advantage of the villagers to utilize to the fullest extent the assistance and co-operation and advice which the Government has placed at their disposal through these departments. Sometimes there are complaints that the villagers are slow to learn; that they are wedded to ancient and antiquated ways of cultivation and treatment of cattle; that they are shy of everything new and do not pay much heed to what is suggested to them in the way of improved cultivation or better cattle-breeding. I think that this is not a wise course to adopt. People in other lands spend lakhs of rupees for the sake of securing competent expert advice. Here advice is available to the villagers free of cost and I think that our villagers should diligently follow such advice in the fullest confidence that it is offered to them solely for their betterment and they should reap the fullest benefit out of it.

**Horticulture.**—Though I have mentioned it in passing I should like to emphasize the importance of horticulture in our villages. One does find little flowers here and there, but each villager should have his flowering shrubs. They add grace and sweetness to the life, especially of the children. Then again we must have more fruit trees of all kinds in our villages. The Tenancy Bill which will soon be passed confers powers on the villagers to plant fruit trees on their holdings. I hope a liberal use will be made of such powers. Experienced physicians now emphasize the necessity of fruit as part of our diet. Our villagers themselves in the mango season eat mangoes liberally and so also some other seasonal fruits. But I know that many of our poor brethren have no opportunity of eating fruits themselves or of giving them to their children. I therefore suggest that fruit trees should be planted on a country-wide scale. We celebrated a fruit tree plantation week last year and I hope we will have the same thing this year also. This should be considered to be part of rural development.

Speaking about flowers, we can develop a good cottage industry of flowers. People know that all round every place of pilgrimage like Banaras or Mathura where flowers are in large demand hundreds of bighas of land are under flower cultivation. In Hassayan in the Aligarh District and in Ghazipur rose is largely cultivated for *Itr* purposes; similarly jasmine in the Jaunpur District. Some enterprising industrialist should bestow attention upon it. Any way, we should plant the best kinds of roses and jasmine and *bela* and manufacture our own scents and oils out of those flowers.

**Manure.**—There is another cognate matter in this connection. It is so sad to find that in thousands of villages most valuable manure is burnt. Cattle manure is dried up in *uplas* and is used as fuel. I have noticed this in Mainpuri, Etawah and other districts. When I spoke to the villagers about this matter they said that they had no other fuel to burn therefore they were compelled to burn this dried up manure. Manure is wealth for the countryside. It is suicidal for the villager to destroy manure in this way. The village community when it is formed into a *Gaon Panchayat* should take immediate steps to have grazing grounds and also have fuel available for the villagers. Trees for fuel should be planted on a very



large scale and an effort should be made to save as much cattle manure as possible for purely agricultural purposes.

**Village Industries.**—I now come to the subject of village industries. It is realised on all hands that our villagers must have a subsidiary occupation as a supplementary source of their income. The immense poverty in our countryside is due to the fact that our villagers have no such subsidiary occupation. They depend mostly on their cultivation and live from hand to mouth. Failure of crops in any year due to any causes such as drought, hailstorm, pests, etc., causes suffering and misery because the villager has got nothing to fall back upon. As it is, it is wonderful with what fortitude and patience and courage the villager bears the calamities and misfortunes which often befall him. With better agriculture and greater yield and profitable marketing the villager's resources would increase and he will be better able to face seasons of scarcity and drought. But even then it is essential that he should have some subsidiary occupation, apart from his farming. It must constantly be borne in mind that the poor man's time is his great wealth and it is his duty not to waste it in idle pursuits or in laziness but to utilize every hour of it and turn it to advantage in some shape or form. I do not by any means say that he should have no relaxation and should not enjoy himself in village sports and festivals. But apart from that there is plenty of time mis-spent in doing practically nothing and of that time he should make profitable use. He may turn to any industry he likes.

Before I go further, it is necessary to remove a common error. It is supposed that only that industry is good whose output can be sold and converted into cash. I know that the villager does require money for various purposes; but after all the use of money is to enable a man to acquire many things for his personal use and domestic consumption. It would be all to the good if in their spare time each family in the village were to make something not for sale but for their own personal use. Supposing a family keeps a cow or a buffalo. It should be kept primarily for the purpose of getting pure milk for the use of the children and other members of the family and the spare milk should be made into butter and *ghee* for the family's use so that there may be plenty of *mattha* or separated milk also for the use of the family and also for the cattle. It is only the spare milk and spare *ghee* that should be sold. It would be a matter of great sorrow indeed if the family were compelled to sell every drop of milk or every ounce of butter and *ghee* and keep nothing for the use of children. Similarly, take the case of cloth. Mahatma Gandhi has now brought home to every family in India the beauty of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. Every family should keep several *charkhas* so that all men, women and children in the family may in their spare hours be able to ply the *charkha*. The yarn spun by them should be woven into cloth and the cloth should not be sold but used by the family. Here again no trouble about marketing arises. You make your own cloth and wear it. It is only in the case of those families who spin yarn or weave cloth as a means of subsistence that the question of marketing arises. There are many other things which a family needs for their comfort and convenience or for the purpose of beautifying the home. All these, if purchased in the market, cost money. Instead of purchasing them one can make them at home in one's spare hours and use them. You do not thus get money in silver, but you get something much better, namely, the things for which money is needed. It is not necessary that one should learn to make everything that is needed in the home. Different families in the village may make different



things, and for these simple articles it will not be difficult to put in practice a system of barter. One family may spin yarn; another may weave cloth; a third may make *gur*; a fourth may possess dairy produce; a fifth may make some pottery; a sixth some leather goods, and so on. The *panches* in the village may fix up a system of barter by which on terms stated one kind of article may be exchanged for another in a specified manner. This system will be beneficial to the village as a whole. It would make the village self-sufficient. It would do away with the troubles attendant upon the need for marketing and would enrich and beautify every home. It must be realised deeply by our villagers that a human child requires a well-balanced diet to build up a strong vigorous body and mind, and to deprive the child of food and milk is not only cruelty to the child but is a great loss to the nation. The villagers should sell off their produce to as much extent as is absolutely essential to enable them to pay their rents and other dues and retain the rest of the produce for their domestic consumption. To sell good wholesome stuff in exchange for tinsel and shoddy things dumped into the country from foreign lands is not only waste of good money but is not a wise thing to do. It is detrimental to the interest of the growing generation. I therefore suggest that in the *Panchayat-Ghars* there should be kept a small store of village products for barter and if necessary for sale in the village itself. It is further desirable that this village store should also be a regular stall of articles that the villagers need most and on whose purchase every villager spends every week a substantial sum. I have noticed that villagers generally go to the weekly markets for purchasing kerosine oil, salt, *gur* and tobacco and such other articles. Surely there should be no difficulty in the village store keeping a stock of these articles. The store can purchase large quantities at economical rates and then sell the same to its members at reasonable prices, thereby saving the villagers a good deal of time which they now spend in going to the village fair once or twice a week for making small purchases of these articles, and also save some money too.

My first suggestion therefore is that the villagers should bring into their own personal and domestic use the products of their own village industries. If this is done in the case of many industries there will be no surplus left over. For instance, take the case of *khadi*. I have no doubt that the villagers can easily utilize all the *khadi* manufactured by themselves and there will seldom be any question of marketing any surplus; but there may be many other industries in which there is bound to be surplus. The dairy industry is an industry allied to agriculture and it can be a great support to the peasant in his time of need. The best way of disposing of the dairy produce is by co-operative marketing by the formation of co-operative *ghee* marketing societies. There can be other industries such as home-pressed oil and *gur* making, tanning, toy making, basket making, *newar* making, bee-keeping, carpentry and others. Poultry breeding is also suitable for many communities. I am aware that marketing is a great problem. Government is doing its utmost to encourage and develop cottage industries. It is taking steps to form travelling tuitional classes under competent instructors whose duty is to go about from area to area in a district and instruct local artisans and also villagers in improved forms of that particular industry. Extensive departmental activities are going on under the *gur* development scheme for training villagers in the art of extracting the greatest quantity of juice from sugarcane by the use of improved crushers and also in preparing *gur*. Demonstrations are being held by the Department in *gur* making. Similarly there are tuitional



classes in tanning and also in carpentry. Government is also taking steps to open polytechnics for the purpose of training people living in rural areas in numerous village industries. As for marketing, Government has adopted a scheme under which about 150 stores will be opened in all the districts of the province where the products of village industries will be sold. The scheme is that it will be open to any villager to bring his own goods to the store and leave them there for sale at price stated by him. The store will do business for him and may probably charge a very nominal fee for acting as his agent. If he needs money in advance, he can get advance on his goods from the co-operative society or the co-operative bank. All these stores will be opened at centres where the demand of the products of village industries exists or can be developed. The villager will have the satisfaction of having an absolutely sound agency shop for selling his goods. In this way, while the Government is endeavouring to assist the villager both in learning the technique of particular village industries and in the marketing of the goods, it is for the villager to help himself and engage himself in such industrial pursuits as may appeal to him.

As I have already said above, the very basis of the whole scheme for rural development should be the formation of multi-purpose co-operative societies. These societies should cover the whole life of the villages and should have different sections by which different activities of their members may be guided and carried on.

**Thrift and Litigation.**—I have now described how the villagers can improve their economic condition and increase their wealth by better agriculture and by the development of cottage industries. But a man's economic condition ultimately depends not only on what he earns but also on how he spends it. I do not hold the view that our villager should lead the life of a puritan or of a hermit, and deny himself all pleasures. The villagers lead a rigorous life of daily toil in sun and rain and cold, and it is but fair that they should have ample relaxation and simple enjoyment. Then there are occasions such as marriages where customary expenses of a reasonable nature should be incurred; but thrifty and careful expenditure is one thing and waste and extravagance is quite another. For a poor man like our villager it is almost criminal to waste his money in drinks and drugs and to indulge in the ruinous luxury of litigation. I really think that even on drinks and drugs comparatively speaking little money is wasted. Our villagers are sober and decent people, but litigiousness has ruined many families and is considered by very many in every village as a pastime. Simple differences of opinion lead to serious disputes and serious disputes lead to breaking of heads and consequent protracted proceedings in the criminal courts. Then again, small controversies which can be easily settled by amicable agreement or through the intervention of good neighbours lead to most expensive civil litigation, sometimes going right up to the High Court and the Board of Revenue. In my practice at the Bar I have known how litigation has proved to be the curse of our countryside. Every village is torn up by factions—zamindars against zamindars, co-sharers against co-sharers, tenants ranging on either side as partisans. It is heart-breaking to think how the few rupees which a villager manages, to earn by the sweat of his brow are wasted in a single day in a court of law. Arbitration and settlement of disputes without recourse to law courts is desirable in every part of the world, but in a poor country like India it is doubly essential. If the villagers want to save themselves from ruin they must banish this terrible demon of litigiousness from their villages. Better-Living Societies and *Panchayats* should provide an impartial method of



settling disputes by amicable discussion and negotiation. It is gratifying that the villagers are taking this lesson to their heart and there are hundreds of villages in the province where the proud boast is that not a single case of the village has gone to law courts for years and years. I do not see any difficulty why the decisions by *Panchayats* should not be the normal feature of life in our villages. Their disputes are of a petty description and are capable of easy solution. I earnestly hope that each village society would frame rules and by-laws making it compulsory for the members to have recourse to *Panchayats* rather than go to law courts and ruin themselves.

These in brief are some suggestions how the villagers can help themselves. Their salvation lies in their own hands, and unless they gird up their loins to help themselves Government will not be able to infuse life and energy into the rural development work.

I have dwelt upon the co-operative organization in the village as the basic unit. When these primary village societies are established on a sound basis, then it will be easy to develop this co-operative organization on a much bigger scale. Several primary societies could form themselves into a union, and several unions in a tehsil into a tehsil union and either through the tehsil union or directly all the unions may form themselves into a district federation. The district federation would be able to control the entire marketing operations on behalf of the unions and their primary societies. This district federation can handle efficiently and in the most profitable manner the entire produce of all kinds of all the villages in the district. The middleman who nowadays derives so much profit which should go to the villagers can be largely eliminated and the district federations can further be formed into a provincial federation for the whole province. The only thing that is required is discipline and organization and a spirit of service on the part of the leading villagers in each village.