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Agricultural Education in India.

By Keshava Sharan Agarwala, M.Sc., LL.B.

IN a predominantly agricultural country like India where the vast majority of the population lives on agriculture, the importance of agricultural education cannot be overemphasised. The need for it has been fully realised by the Government of India and the Provincial Governments and much has been done in this direction in recent years in the form of practical demonstration and propaganda on Agricultural farms and by providing facilities for higher education in agriculture. Besides the Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa and the Imperial Institute of Animal Husbandary and Dairying at Bangalore, which provide post-graduate training and research facilities in agricultural science and for which the Government of India is responsible, the provinces have their own agricultural colleges teaching diploma and degree classes. In addition to these agricultural colleges, some of the Indian Universities have also recently instituted B.Sc. courses in agriculture.

The collegiate education in agriculture is no doubt very useful and necessary, but even at the best, only a very small portion of the population can hope to obtain it. Moreover, the graduate coming out of the agricultural college, as a rule, seeks Government or other employment instead of taking up practical farming where he could give the fullest benefit of his advanced education to the country's agriculture. For the rural masses, considering their number as well as

their gross illiteracy, what is required is a type of general agricultural education of a school standard and imparted through the vernacular medium of instruction. There should be established agricultural schools all over the country so that the children of the agricultural classes may freely join them after the necessary vernacular education and learn the up-to-date methods of cultivation and the use of new implements, etc., under trained teachers in a course of 3 to 4 years just to suit their practical needs. These schools will provide the country with a set of young men who will take up the cultivation of land according to modern agricultural methods.

There are very few agricultural schools at present in India and there is a definite demand in the country for more schools of this type. Unfortunately, the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Agriculture to the effect that there should be no extension of such schools greatly retarded their growth. Time has, however, amply proved the immense utility of such institutions and the Provincial Governments are also recognising their usefulness. In this connection, it is gratifying to note the decision of the Bombay Government to continue the two farming schools in the presidency, the abolition of which was recommended by the Thomas Reorganisation Committee. The Government have, however, decided to effect economies in the working of these schools. It may be mentioned that in the case of educational institutions, economies are effected either by curtailing their activities by staff reduction or by increasing the fees. None of these methods should be adopted in this case since there is necessity for opening more schools and also for popularising them by fixing the fees as low as possible so as to bring them within the reach of the rural masses.

It might be pleaded that in these days of financial stringency, much attention and money cannot be devoted to agricultural education. It must not, however, be forgotten that the interest of the whole country is at stake in agriculture and that agricultural education is a necessity if the country is to have the fullest benefit of its agricultural industry. Its development will undoubtedly lead to greater prosperity and a bright future. The educational activities about agriculture therefore require extension and should on no account be curtailed.

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**The Great Indian Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera Indica*)
stranded at Bombay.**

ON 7th May a large specimen of the Great Indian Fin Whale was washed ashore at the Colaba Reclamation, Bombay. The specimen had evidently been long dead as it was thrown up in a highly decomposed condition. Being an unusual sight and considered a sacred animal, news of the monster spread far and wide. Hundreds of people continued to visit the spot for several days till the carcass was removed. In spite of the condition of the carcass people flocked to collect the oozing blubber and portions of the meat. The condition of the animal was such that it was quite impossible to make detailed notes to amplify the meagre description of Blandford in the *Fauna British India (Mammalia)*, p. 567. This description was based on the mandibular rami, a rib, the right radius and 5 vertebrae preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Nothing is known of the external characters of this whale.

Though the *Times of India* reported this specimen to be 52 ft. in length, the figure is much under-estimated,

considering the actual length of the mandibular rami. Each mandible taped approximately 20 ft. 4 in. over the outer curve and 16 ft. in straight measurement. Working on this data it is estimated that this whale could not have been much under 70 ft. when in the flesh, perhaps even a little longer.

There are several records of the stranding of this species along the west coast of India. A specimen measuring 63 ft. was washed ashore at Bassein, north of Bombay, in 1906.¹ Another, 70 ft. in length, was reported from Vizadrag, near Ratnagiri. In 1912 a specimen 61 ft. was stranded at Ratnagiri. Prater² gave some measurements and a photograph of the small Great Indian Fin Whale 41 ft. in length, which was washed up at Ratnagiri in 1914. There are a few records of the stranding of this species along our coast. In all cases the carcasses were too decomposed to add much to the existing description.

MCCANN.

¹ *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 1906, 17, 533.

² *Ibid.*, 1914, 23, 576.

NEWS

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF WOMEN SCIENTISTS

... "The unfavourable position of women in science is usually explained either by the 'biological myth' that women innately lack the capacities for scientific work, or by the 'motherhood myth', according to which the demands of a scientific career are incompatible with marriage and children. The former 'explanation' doesn't even merit refutation, the latter, however, deserves some consideration. ... Comparison of married and single men and women scientists suggests that there is no incompatibility between a scientific career and a family as such. On the contrary, marriage seems to have a positive effect on the

professional life of women scientists. As one scientist put it, 'The biggest effect of marriage is to eliminate the disturbing influences of external factors. Dating would take up too much time and energy. ... 'Marriage thus creates stability and 'routinization of work patterns' — an aspect pointed out ... as an explanation for the differential publishing rates of married and single scientists". (Reproduced with permission from *Press Digest, Current Contents*® No. 25, June 18, 1984, Copy right by the Institute for Scientific Information® Philadelphia, PA USA.)