
CURRENT SCIENCE 50 YEARS AGO

THE INDIAN VILLAGE—ITS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE*By Rao Bahadur T. S. Venkatraman, B.A., I.A.S., F.N.I.***POSITION OF INDIA WITH REFERENCE TO SPACE AND TIME**

But before getting into the subject proper it is necessary to record here a few general observations on the position of our country with regard to both space and time viewpoints. With China, Japan and the South-Eastern islands, India is situated in a comparatively densely populated area of the globe—about half the population of the world being crowded into a tenth of the Earth's land region. This has had its effects on the type of agriculture practised in the country, the selection of crop for cultivation and the life of the people as a whole.

Secondly, along again with China, India possesses a civilization and culture which was at least contemporaneous with, if not antecedent to, the civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome. After making considerable progress this civilization has, however, remained in a more or less quiescent and petrified state in our villages for well nigh two to three thousand years, little influenced by the great progress made by the West during the latter part of the same period. It is only within comparatively recent times that the Western civilization has come to spread into and influence the countryside. In more senses than one the Indian town represents the dynamic West with all the vigour of youth and the village the comparatively quiescent East. Certain of the problems of the village to be discussed hereafter will be found traceable to the inevitable contact between the two.

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THE GREAT CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

To realise fully the present conditions of the Indian village and understand its problems it is necessary to briefly notice here the changes that are coming over it and the reasons for that change. The Indian village of ancient times was practically a self-contained, self-governing unit, having but little contact with the outside world. It grew all the crops required to meet all its simple needs and the surplus

of good years was stored in the village granaries as a provision against future unfavourable seasons. The people of the village lived like the members of a big family under the accepted leadership of the village elders—the Panchayatdars. Land was plenty, needs few and there was a great deal of contentment. The villager's outlook and knowledge were limited rarely extending beyond the confines of his own village and the villager's life ran an even course from day to day. This had been the condition for well nigh two to three thousand years.

One very important result of the contact with the West has been the development of the export and import trades which have affected profoundly the kind of crops grown and both the occupation and mode of life of the villager. It is steadily dragging him out of his isolation and throwing him into the world currents of commerce and industry. He is not content to grow crops to meet the needs of his own village but finds it more 'profitable' to grow what are termed 'commercial' crops for outside markets as distant as New York or London. This has upset the old time food centred economics of the village and rendering them increasingly money centred. The more enterprising and intelligent of the villagers are attracted by the commercial life and tend to shift themselves to the nearest town or city temporarily in the beginning but often permanently in the end. It is no wonder that such great changes have brought in their train a variety of problems connected with our villages.

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THE FUTURE OF THE INDIAN VILLAGE

After this rapid review of the Indian village in the past and the changes that have been coming over it up to the present time we are now in a position to consider its future. There is little doubt that the general tendency so far has been for the village to steadily go down in prosperity and importance in contrast to the town which has increasingly drawn the best from the village. The question to consider is, if this is in the best interests of our country and, if not, are any steps needed to place the village in a better position than now. Does the future lie in a greater and further development of urban life.

evolving measures that would somewhat mitigate the inevitable disadvantages associated with it or does the situation need radical changes in the village and village life, importing into it certain characteristics of the town?

In spite of its having become trite, the statement that ours is an agricultural country warrants repetition on account of its far-reaching effects on all our activities. The plough with a pair of oxen is perhaps the one symbol that would properly represent India as a whole with its different classes and communities. Secondly, the rapid increase of population in our country and China has become a byword and this renders incumbent a further increase of agricultural production. Science has so far not succeeded in growing crops on the roofs of houses or on road-sides in towns and the best achievements of agriculture have been in the countryside. The clearly indicated line of advance for the future, therefore, lies in improving rural conditions and rendering our villages better and more efficient in the discharge of duties set to them by the country as a whole, viz., (1) the proper and adequate feeding of the steadily increasing population, and (2) rearing a healthy stock of men and cattle and maintaining them in a fit condition.

Both town and village are needed for the full and complete development of our country as a whole. The town is a natural and inevitable product in this development. 'If God made the country' the town was and is being made by man, His agent, and in response to forces no less natural in the broad sense of the term. Ours has been and still largely is a land of villages but the towns have risen up and are bound to multiply and expand in the future. In recent times there has been a growing tendency to centralize culture and activities in the town to the disadvantage of the village; and the towns and cities have in a sense grown at the expense of the village.

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IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL EFFICIENCY

Elsewhere we have considered certain serious handicaps the present-day village agriculture is labouring under. Thanks to the good work inaugurated by Lord Curzon's Government about thirty years ago reinforced and supplemented by the elaborate and far-reaching recommendations of the ROYAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE of 1930, we are now in a position to feel that technical advances in agriculture and allied sciences can be

taken to have been provided for. The Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, a lusty child of the Royal Commission, has already won back to us a major industry and is engaged in grappling with problems of fundamental importance like marketing.

While on this point I cannot resist the temptation to refer to the outstanding achievements in the breeding of valuable crop types. Our most rapid and effective advance in agriculture has been along this line and to-day almost every crop is being systematically bred all over the country. Advance in this direction—viz., the improvement of crop type and distribution of its seed—has been the most suitable to our present conditions of comparative poverty of resources in other directions. For the production of these types the resources in the way of plant material of more than one country has been and is being systematically employed. Combined with substantial Tariff protection afforded by a kind Government, it has resuscitated our sugar industry and thus saved a drain to the country of 15 crores of rupees per annum on the average. It is employing a hundred thousand additional labourers in the factories and about 1,500 graduates in these days of unemployment besides the five million extra agriculturists directly benefiting from it. This demonstrates the great value to the country as a whole of industries founded upon our own agricultural products.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, there is little doubt that the villages of old were more populated than they are to-day largely because of conditions prevalent at the time. Those conditions will never return however much or sincerely we may hanker after them. The town and the characteristics associated with urban life are definite products in the march of events and need to be accepted as such. Though there are drawbacks associated with urban life the town has its own good points which need extension into the village to keep rural life in tune with the changes around us. At the same time, the countryside has advantages like open spaces and absence of congestion which can never be reproduced in the town.

Life activities that were village centred in the past are increasingly getting town centred to the disadvantage of the former. In the interests of the country as a whole relationship of mutual help needs to be established between the two. The town should

extend to the village its greater knowledge, quicker living and the manifold amenities of the modern age. Contributions from the countryside are of equal importance. It alone can produce the raw materials of commerce and industry and thus help in the growth of towns and cities. It alone can supply adequate and wholesome food to the millions of our land whether resident in the village or town. Lastly, the countryside alone can imbue the urban 'busi-

ness' civilization with the deeper character and larger humanities which are nurtured in the villager through his more direct and constant contact with the great forces of Nature and of life. Our duty then is clear: Namely, to improve the *village*, the nucleus of our country life, and infect its Chief Agent, the *villager*, with a chosen culture of the virus of modern age through *Education* and *Industrialization*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORKSHOP ON APPLICATION OF VACUUM TECHNOLOGY TO SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICES

The Workshop (21-22 February 1987) is organized by the Indian Vacuum Society in collaboration with Semiconductor Society (India) and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. The venue of the Workshop is Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay. Topics for the Workshop: 1. Materials: crystal growth, epitaxy, low pressure CVD, Plasma CVD, Photo CVD, MOCVD, MBE etc. 2. Device processing: Ion implantation, lithography, dry etching etc. 3. Metallisation: Electron beam evaporation, magnetron sputtering etc.

4. Equipment and accessories.

The main objective of this Workshop is to provide an opportunity for scientists and technologists engaged in vacuum and semiconductor device research, development and manufacture, to interact for mutual benefit.

For further particulars please contact: Dr R. Pinto, Convener, Workshop on Application of Vacuum Technology to Semiconductor Devices, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005.

NATIONAL AWARD IN PLANT PROTECTION

In recognition of the vital role, the Integrated Pest Management plays in agricultural and forest productivity, and to further encourage the application of Integrated Pest Management - IPM, a National Award, called "Dr Bap Reddy National Award in Integrated Pest Management" has been established. This will be awarded by the Plant Protection Association of India situated at the Central Plant Protection Training Institute, Hyderabad.

The Award is instituted in honour of Dr D Bap Reddy, an eminent agricultural scientist, who

worked in India and with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and is a pioneer in plant protection.

The Award will be given to those who are engaged in research, development, promotion or practice of Integrated Pest Management, including farmers.

Further particulars may be had from: Dr N. C. Joshi, President, Plant Protection Association of India, Central Plant Protection Training Institute, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad 500 030.
