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Water pollution research

In India Science still remains a blushing young virgin, and industries, an unfilled stripling. They must firmly grasp each other's hands before the public can expect the fulfilment of the promise they hold to each other. Comparing the attitude of industry to-day with that of ten years ago, there is a definite indication of its increasing readiness to make use of scientific method and scientific knowledge. But it is still difficult to assess the change that is taking place in the attitude of industry in India. It seems to us that it is time for the Government of India to consider the necessity of establishing under their auspices a Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. We are convinced that, without the inspiration and influence which such an authoritative organization can exert on the corporate and mutually dependent life and activities of science and industry, both of them will suffer from the withering atmosphere of isolated existence. Every schoolboy knows that the main

purpose of science is to discover facts, and that of industry, to use these facts for the purpose of providing civilized standards of existence, so as to ensure the health, comfort and prosperity of the people. We can conceive of no factor in the modern conditions of life, more potent in promoting these desirable objects than a generous supply of pure and wholesome water for consumption in the homes of people, and in the numerous factories which minister to their daily wants. The ingredients which compose civilization sometimes form a baleful source of contamination of water, and science exerts to restore its purity. Is there in India an organization like 'Water Pollution Research' which is devoted to investigate the physical, chemical and bacteriological impurities of water for which there is greater demand in this country than perhaps in Europe? It is true that in the larger cities water used for drinking purposes is examined periodically by bacteriological institutes, and the municipalities exercise supervision of water reservoirs and catchment areas through their sanitary departments. So far as the needs and interests of the urban population are concerned, we may presume that they are fairly satisfactorily served. But we are thinking of the condition in the towns and rural areas.

We confess that the problem of supplying wholesome and adequate supply of water to the increasing population of India, is both complicated and difficult, but it ought not to be beyond the wit of man to devise satisfactory means for providing the people with this elementary, but nevertheless vital necessity. It is

common knowledge that the general habits and the religious practices of Indian people consume far more water than what is actually required for domestic purposes. When people congregate in large numbers at places of pilgrimage for purificatory baths, we can imagine the amount of damage inflicted upon the purity of water in the rivers and tanks, which without the least compunction is swallowed by man, woman and child with the most touching devotion and defiant disregard to consequences. In the rural areas, men and cattle in a spirit of absolute abandonment defile the slender sources of water supply, and if the population manages to survive such gross offences to sanitary principles, it is entirely due to the sterilizing influence of the tropical sun. . . .

The population of India, when the census of 1941 comes to be written, will certainly reveal a most disconcerting increase, and if no machinery is set up in time to investigate and solve the health problems of this stupendously large community beyond the provincial public health departments, we fear that conditions of existence will soon become appalling. The problems as they are, have assumed continental proportion, and the machinery to deal with them must be correspondingly comprehensive. The establishment of a Water Pollution Research Board under the Central Government, working in collaboration with the provincial health departments may provide the necessary palliative, and if the necessary funds and research workers should be forthcoming, India will be a paradise of sweetness and light.