

THE REMAKING OF VILLAGE INDIA

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*Being the Second Edition of
'Village Uplift in India'*

By

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With Forewords by

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and

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Governor of the Punjab

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To
I. G. B.

‘ It is my wish that there may be spread over the land a network of schools and colleges, from which will go forth loyal and manly and useful citizens, able to hold their own in industries and agriculture and all the vocations in life. And it is my wish, too, that the homes of my Indian subjects may be brightened and their labour sweetened by the spread of knowledge with all that follows in its train, a higher level of thought, of comfort and of health. It is through education that my wish will be fulfilled, and the cause of education in India will ever be very close to my heart.’—*From the King-Emperor’s Speech at the Convocation of Calcutta University, 6th January 1912.*

FOREWORD TO SECOND EDITION

A ROYAL Commission on Indian Agriculture has come and gone. It has left behind a memorable review of the conditions of agriculture in India, of the measures taken in the past to improve it, and of its proposals to this end for the future. Amid the rich store of suggestions touching on many aspects of rural economy, which is contained in the 750 pages of the Commission's Report, no item, perhaps, is more precious than the advice contained in the following passage in the concluding chapter of the Report :

'The aim of the suggestions and recommendations we have made in the preceding chapters has been to bring out greater efficiency throughout the whole field of agricultural production and to render the business of farming more profitable to the cultivator. Throughout our report, we have endeavoured to make plain our conviction that no substantial improvement in agriculture can be effected unless the cultivator has the will to achieve a better standard of living, and the capacity, in terms of mental equipment and of physical health, to take advantage of the opportunities which science, wise laws and good administration may place at his disposal. Of all the factors making for prosperous agriculture, by far the most important is the outlook of the peasant himself.

'This, in the main, is determined by his environment, and it follows, therefore, that the success of all measures designed for the advancement of agriculture must depend upon the creation of conditions favourable to progress. If this conclusion is accepted, the improvement of village life in all directions assumes at once a new importance as the first and essential step in a comprehensive policy designed

to promote the prosperity of the whole population and to enhance the national income at the source. The demand for a better life can, in our opinion, be stimulated only by a deliberate and concerted effort to improve the general conditions of the country-side, and we have no hesitation in affirming that the responsibility for initiating the steps required to effect this improvement rests with Government.'

It is in the fitness of things that one who long before realized the importance of this truth, has resolved at this time to bring out a second edition of *VILLAGE UPLIFT IN INDIA*. Those who welcomed the first edition will be eager to cull the fruit of the further experience contained in the second ; and fortunate indeed are those to whose notice the first edition has not yet come, and who will now have the interest in store for them of reading for the first time in the second edition the moving tale of the difficulties which clouded the lives of the rural population in the Gurgaon District, and of the methods by which Mr. and Mrs. Brayne and their devoted fellow-workers strove to overcome the inertia of centuries and to bring a little light to thousands of humble homes.

Simla,
31st August 1928

G. F. DE MONTMORENCY,
Governor, Punjab

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE first edition of 5,000 has gone in a few months and a fuller and better edition seems to be called for, both as a permanent record of the results achieved and as a guide and an encouragement to the many who are already working on the same or similar lines.

The book has been published, and is selling fast, in Urdu, Hindi and Roman-Urdu. Gujarathi, Marathi, Gurmukhi, and another variety of Hindi, translations are in preparation and will be ready shortly.

The interest shown in the work has been most stimulating and, besides many letters of enquiry and congratulation, Gurgaon has received visits from ladies and gentlemen—official and non-official, Indian and European—from all over British India and from many native states, as well as from Europe, and even occasionally America.

The lady superintendent, Miss E. M. Wilson, joined her appointment on 1st January 1928, and the female and infant welfare and uplift work has, in consequence, been properly organized, necessitating the rewriting of that part of the book (Chapter IV). The chapter dealing with organization has naturally had to be rewritten to deal with the changes and developments in the work as it proceeded (Chapter V), and two new chapters have been added, one called 'By the Way' (Chapter XI), discussing various matters which have come into prominence since the issue of the first edition, and the other describing the parts which the Boy Scout and the village schoolmaster can play in the great work of uplift (Chapter IX).

The rest of the book has been carefully revised, and the appendixes brought up to date and much enlarged. The curricula both of the School of Rural Economy and of the School of Domestic Economy have been added (Appendix II), besides copies of suggested by-laws designed to help the Gurgaon cattle improvement scheme, to assist horse and pony breeding, and to enable the District Board to tidy, keep tidy, and improve the villages (Appendix IV). Mr. Darling has kindly allowed me to publish the model by-laws for Co-operative Better Living or Uplift Societies (Appendix III).

There has been a demand for plans of properly protected wells, combined latrine and refuse pits, as well as of good houses and well-planned villages. These have been accordingly included in the Appendixes. The plans of the wells and pits are those finally decided upon, after many experiments, to be the best for our purposes, but the house and village are only suggestions—albeit carefully thought out and much discussed suggestions—as we have had no opportunity of testing them in actual and continued use (Appendix V). I am indebted to Mr. Bhattacharia, the District Board Engineer, for the excellent plans he has prepared.

Hindustani words are briefly explained, the first time they occur, in footnotes, and more fully in a Glossary at the end.

Palwal Show was an immense success this year, and, fortunately, it was watched and studied by visitors from more than a score of districts in the Punjab and the United Provinces, and several native states. The value of loud-speakers has been proved by demonstration for the handling of large crowds, for lectures, songs and dramas, and for announcements of all kinds, from programmes and prize-winners to lost children and sanitary arrangements.

It is probably the first time that these instruments have been used in a rural show in India, and in future no show will be worth the name without them.

Want of money has not only necessitated closing down all but the most essential portions of the campaign, but has also prevented our touching an immense amount of work in which a very little effort would have ensured very big successes, and the impossibility of coping with the extra work that devolved on myself and my assistants has terribly cramped our programme. There are any number of improvements in agriculture we could have established, such as regular rat-killing and the tackling of the yellow-tail moth, and the general introduction of the iron plough (we have nearly 2,000 as it is, but had to give up this branch of our work for want of staff to deal with it), harrows, chaff-cutters, proper threshing arrangements, and other labour-saving devices. We had to abandon our efforts to perfect the Persian wheel, to organize the training of village blacksmiths to carry out running repairs, and to get good bullock-driven flour-mills—although we could sell a thousand mills in six months if we could lay hands on a satisfactory mill and had the staff to handle the work. Inside and outside the villages we wanted to straighten and widen the lanes, flatten out and remove the many ruins that disfigure our villages, tidy up generally, and introduce spades and wheelbarrows, instead of hoes and baskets, for earthwork and sanitation. The thorn hedges in and around the villages are most dirty, untidy, and wasteful of space, and very liable to catch and spread fire, and, with a little effort, we could have replaced them with walls. One village has already done it, to the great pride and comfort of the people. We could have popularized mosquito nets and quinine, and done even more vaccinations than we have

done, but without staff and money one can only do what one can! It was disappointing to have to let all these opportunities go which years of propaganda had made, but there was nothing else for it.

With shortages of staff and money, the temptation has always been present to abandon parts of the district and concentrate on the more promising parts. I regard this as utterly unsound, and will never be a party to it. It is far better to advance a short way on a broad front than make model villages here and there and leave the rest in their pristine squalor. The unattacked area reinforces the resistance of the attacked area for fear that its turn will come next, and the selected area resists the more vigorously because it does not see why it should be bothered when other people are left alone. I have seen this happen again and again. The work progresses more slowly and costs more money and it never spreads to other places, as, by the time there are any results to show, the original enthusiasts have gone and the whole business is forgotten. Barrage the whole district, on the other hand, and results are immediately visible and the success spreads like an epidemic. No one can say he is being unfairly treated; the weak spots in the enemy's defences are soon found and overrun, and his whole line rolled up. This is the key to our success in Gurgaon, and we are convinced it is the only way to tackle village remaking. Ferozepur Jhirka tahsil¹ was to all appearance the most hopeless case in the district, and yet they have more and better pits than any other tahsil in the district, except possibly Ballabgarh, and out of very shame the others have had to follow suit. An out-of-the-way village like Dharuhera started the co-

¹ Sub-division of a district; there are six tahsils in Gurgaon District, with from 200 to 250 villages each.

education movement, and still leads it, with a vernacular middle school of seventy girls and seventy boys. Guraora, a boundary zail,¹ suddenly came into notice with a hundred and fifty iron ploughs in regular use. Instances could be multiplied of the value of a broadcast campaign. Until a village is actually tackled, no one can say how it will react, and one obstinate man may hold up the whole movement as long as work is only done on an experimental scale. Once you work on a broad front no one can stop you; your friends rally to you, enthusiasm and rivalry are created, and one success leads to another.

A large part of our time was taken up last cold weather in showing visitors round, in lecturing in other districts and provinces, and in publication work. We do not grudge a minute of this time, as it is bearing fruit all over northern India, but, as there were no extra staff or funds for this extra work, it has unfortunately interfered with the efficiency of our efforts in our own district, and nothing like the progress was made there that should have been. Indeed, in places there were signs of slipping back, but this, regrettable though it was, could not be helped.

Even so, some of our visitors are apt to think that the struggle is over in Gurgaon. Far from it. Gurgaon is still terribly backward. It took infinite labour and infinite drive and enthusiasm to get the work going at all, and not for one moment can we afford to relax our efforts if we want to keep it going. Gurgaon still requires, and will probably continue for many years to require, far more effort for its regeneration than probably any other district in the province. For this reason we hope that Gurgaon, which has given the lead in this tremendous movement, will, at any

¹ Sub-division of a tahsil, containing usually from fifteen to twenty-five villages.

rate for some years to come, receive special favours and be treated as the demonstration area and training ground for uplift work.

As for wireless, we could broadcast our programme from Delhi Fort for a paltry Rs. 10,000, plus the cost of loud-speaking receivers, but we are unable as yet to include this priceless weapon in our armoury. Our propaganda has gone so far that we are certain that the people of Gurgaon District would attend in hundreds in every village to listen, and would pay for their own receivers; and a two-hour programme of songs, lectures, dialogues and news, given three nights a week from Delhi Fort, would be eagerly listened to in scores of villages in every district for a hundred miles round Delhi.

In the preface to the first edition the names of two of our keenest helpers, Rai Sahib Dr. Thakur and M. Mohamed Zaffar, were by an oversight omitted, and I hasten to make amends here. Dr. Thakur has been the District Medical Officer of Health throughout, and has been invaluable in working out and putting into practice the health side of the campaign; while M. Mohamed Zaffar has sacrificed much of his time and legal practice to edit—honorarily, of course—the District Gazette from its start until now.

The word 'uplift' gave offence to the fastidious; it has in fact definitely misleading associations. I have accordingly altered the title of this edition to 'The Remaking of Village India', though the old word 'Uplift' remains perhaps the most conveniently short, and at the same time comprehensively descriptive, word for the work now being done.

Much of our work has been described in simple dialogue form (in English and other languages) in a book, just published for me by the Oxford University Press, called *Socrates*

in an Indian Village. This book includes the dialogue which appears in Appendix VIII of the present book.

The Army has paid us the compliment of experimenting with the Rural School as a vocational training centre for short-service soldiers, and the Co-operative Department is to use both the Rural and the Domestic Schools for training its staff, and is also sending its employees to our Boy Scout training camps. Other provinces and native states are also making use of our institution, while Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Chief Scout of the world, has written out to India to see what can be done by the Boy Scouts on the lines of 'Gurgaon Uplift'.

The latest encouragements are the Gold Kaiser-i-Hind medal, granted to Mrs. Brayne in the recent Birthday Honours, and the references to Gurgaon in the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. There is no doubt that 'Gurgaon Uplift' has come to stay, not only in Gurgaon, but in India at large.

Westwood, Gt. Ryburgh, Norfolk,
July 1928

F. L. B.

FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION

It has sometimes been said that the Indian Government has, at different times, and in different ways, and with varying degrees of success, attacked almost every problem except the one which is the most important of all, namely, the improvement of the conditions of rural life. That is not entirely true, for we have indirectly done much to improve those conditions, by the general spread of education, by the stimulus given to the co-operative movement, and by the work of our Health and Agricultural departments, which, if now only at the beginning of their career, have already done much for the welfare of the villager. But the charge is to this extent true, that we have never made a direct and a concerted attack on this problem ; we have never deliberately attempted to effect that change in the psychology of the peasant, and in his social and personal habits, without which it is impossible materially to improve his conditions of life. The reason did not lie entirely in the immensity of the task. It was obvious that we should have to encounter an enormous dead-weight of conservatism and apathy ; there were many who, not unreasonably, feared the result of preaching to the villager that discontent with his own conditions of life which was necessary to his improvement ; and not many of us, to tell the final truth, have had the missionary spirit necessary for the enterprise. For the villager has the keen instincts of a man who lives very close to nature ; he will not be persuaded by those whom he has not learnt to trust, charm they never so wisely, and he will not trust those who

do not seem prepared to put aside all other claims and considerations, in order to live with him, to learn his troubles, and to support him through them.

Gurgaon has been the pioneer in a movement which can at least claim the merit of making a direct attack on this problem. Its authors would be the first to admit that at the moment it is in the stage of experiment, and has been able to touch only certain aspects of village life ; but this may be taken for certain, that it has already achieved valuable and encouraging results. Other districts of the Punjab have begun to show an interest in the movement, and I welcome this record of the objects at which it has aimed, and the methods it has adopted. On one point there will be no difference of opinion. Those who follow in the same field may improve on the methods chosen ; but they will not easily match the fine spirit of enthusiasm which has been manifest in those who have initiated the movement in Gurgaon.

*Government House,
Lahore,
18th November 1927*

W. M. HAILEY,
Governor, Punjab

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS book does not pretend to be either a description of, or a panacea for, all the ills of rural India. It tries to describe the conditions of one district, the remedies devised for them, and the machinery evolved to put these remedies into operation.

These notes—for the book is nothing but a collection of notes—were written for Gurgaon District, a very poor and backward area adjoining the Province of Delhi, and are the result of six years' intensive study of rural conditions ; and the remedies suggested are all being tried on a larger or smaller scale—smaller, as a rule, for want of sufficient funds to do more—in that district.

The various chapters of the book were all written at different times, and no part of the book was specially written for publication in book form, and as a result it is feared that it will not read very smoothly, and there are bound to be repetitions and inconsistencies. Some of these defects have been removed and many of the facts and statistics have been brought up to date, but it is certain that many corrections and alterations that should have been made have been overlooked. For these I crave indulgence, as there was no time to rewrite the whole book, and it was a choice of either publishing it as it was or not publishing it at all.

The first four chapters are reprints of propaganda leaflets which have run into several editions. Besides being of great use in the district, they are in constant demand in many other districts, and have been asked for from several other provinces.

The Gurgaon scheme of uplift is more or less complete, and embraces the work of every department of Government which is engaged in rural work. The details have been worked out in the closest consultation with many helpers, official and non-official, and after visiting many hundreds of villages and discussing every aspect of every proposal with many thousands of villagers. Every item of the programme can be seen in actual practice in some village or other, many items in dozens of villages, and some in practically every village, in the district.

The general soundness of the scheme can, I think, be inferred from the success it has met with. If the people did not really believe in cleanliness, how could 40,000 pits and more, all six feet deep, be dug! If the people were not anxious to uplift their womenfolk, no force on earth could bring more than 1,500 girls to the boys' schools in less than two years from the first day the idea was mooted. A glance at the appendix containing some of the results will convince the reader that the people, at any rate—and they are no mean judges of their own interests—consider that we are on the right lines; and why should the districts around begin to copy us if the people thought we were wrong?

It must not be supposed that this Gurgaon scheme, either in its conception or its execution, is a one-man effort. Nothing of the sort. I have been helped throughout by the most devoted labours of the local officers of every department, by my own staff, from the highest to the lowest, and by the people themselves, not only in thinking out remedies for the various evils that exist, but in popularizing and carrying out the remedies we have agreed upon. The district, no less than I myself, owes them a very heavy debt of gratitude for their unsparing efforts. I should like to express my

own gratitude to all my loyal helpers, but it is impossible to mention here more than a very few.

Rai Sahib Dhanpat Rai, Tahsildar, Gurgaon, and Ch. Ghulam Qadir, my Office Superintendent, have laboured unceasingly and with devoted loyalty for the last six and a half years, and their patent sincerity and their local knowledge have been of infinite value in all our work. Ch. Pohop Singh, Vice-Chairman, District Board, and lately Member of the Punjab Legislative Council, has been our strongest ally and has entered heart and soul into the work of uplift and development. S. Gopal Singh, Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, has always provided sound advice and criticism, and helped in every scheme. M. Abdul Haq, P.C.S., 'made' the Palwal Show, and M. Lal Singh, P.C.S., has maintained and still further developed it. S. Mahmud Hussain, P.C.S., organized the Rural Community Council, and L. Kanwar Bhan, P.C.S., has helped keenly with the welfare work. M. Abdul Rahman, Inspector of Post Offices, and Ch. Lajja Ram, Tahsildar, have composed songs, which are popular all over the district.

Mr. J. S. Ingram, manager of the Ingram-Skinner Estate, not only aids our counsels, but is rapidly transforming his large estate into a series of model villages and farms, thereby affording invaluable demonstrations of the practicability of our whole scheme of uplift.

Upon the tahsildars, of course, falls the brunt of the work, in this as in everything else; and special thanks are due to M. Abdul Rahman and M. Karrar Hussain for showing how our programme can be translated into action in the villages; and to L. Tulsi Ram and Ch. Lajja Ram for the progress they have made in the difficult tahsils of Nuh and Palwal. But all of us would be helpless without the loyal zaildars, the backbone of the agricultural classes, such as Ch. (now

Rao Sahib) Badam Singh, Ch. Bhagwat Singh, Ch. Farzand Ali, R. S. Chhaju Ram and P. Jiwan Lal. To all these and many more the district owes a very deep debt of gratitude, for showing the way, stemming the opposition of custom and conservatism, and setting the example in moving forward towards a better state of things.

These notes are published in the hope that they will prove of use to other workers in this vast and neglected, but fascinatingly interesting, field of enterprise. When all is said and done, however, the only way to do any real good is for keen workers to get down into the actual villages and show the people, by precept and practice, the simple remedies for the evils they suffer from.

Gurgaon,
July 1927

F. L. B.

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