

THEY CAN DO IT THEMSELVES

SUCCESS STORIES OF PANCHAYATS



MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY
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CHAPTER I

1. RAMNAGAR : AN ENTERPRISING PANCHAYAT

"PANCHAYATI RAJ is bound to fail", my friend—a sort of Mr. Know All—declared with firm conviction.

"Beg your pardon," I said finalising a case study of a Panchayat enterprise.

"Most of the Panchayats depend entirely on Government grants which are never sufficient to meet their requirement. This sole dependence on the Government for finance is bound to obstruct the healthy development of any Panchayat. That is why we find that most of the Panchayats are virtually defunct and——"

"Any idea what these papers are," I interrupted.

"No, I saw you scribbling for some time."

"The papers tell about the activities of a Panchayat which does not depend on the Government and is tapping all sources to implement its development plans."

"Is that true?"

"Oh, yes. I myself had been there to observe the activities of the Panchayat. If you have time and patience I will narrate my experience."

"I am all ears," my friend replied.

"It is all about Ramnagar Gram Panchayat. This Panchayat of Malihabad Block is situated on Lucknow-Hardoi Road, about 16 kilometers from Lucknow. It has three villages within its jurisdiction—Tikaitganj, Gola-Kuwan and Mandoli, and a total population of 800.

"The Gram Panchayat came into being in 1955. There were, as you have pointed out, no such sources of income to the Panchayat which could bring permanent annual income to it."

"So they applied for a Government loan," my friend said sarcastically.

"No. They did not," I said, with emphasis. "Instead, the Pradhan of the Panchayat, Shri Hemraj, called a meeting and at that meeting he stressed that a Panchayat of 800 people must undertake new ventures to create permanent assets. He pointed out that the technical as well as non-technical labour of the villages under the Panchayat was being utilised by outside agencies in brick kilns. To start a brick kiln to utilise the home labour was mooted out at that meeting. At the second meeting which was called by the Gram Sabha it was explained to the villagers that all their requirements could be met by the Panchayat only by raising its resources. The brick kiln it was pointed out would ensure supply of bricks for various developmental activities like the construction of a Community Centre, paving the kuchcha roads connecting the three villages so that there was no difficulty during the rainy season, etc. Moreover the brick kiln would provide further employment to the villagers. A committee was formed to go into the details of the scheme.

"In the next meeting of the Gram Sabha the scheme was thoroughly discussed. The Gram Sabha had no funds to invest. The villagers present at the meeting promised to contribute Rs. 45,000 as share capital."

"Did they pay it?"

"No. Some backed out and some contributed much less than what they had promised. The Pradhan collected Rs. 10,946 only by November 1961. But he did not lose heart. He was confident that the brick kiln would be a profitable venture and the capital involved would not be a risk. So he deposited Rs. 3,000 to run the kiln. The Gram Sabha paid Rs. 1,000 as an advance and Rs. 1,500 as a loan.

Then the Pradhan approached Shri. Atmaram Gupta, the Pramukh of Panchayat Samiti who was very helpful. Both, the Pradhan and Pramukh went to the District Planning Officer for a coal permit. The District Planning Officer equally became interested and contacted the District Cooperative Federation to supply

coal to Ramnagar Gram Panchayat. A licence fee of Rs 200 was deposited with Zila Parishad to start the work. And the brick kiln started functioning in January 1962."

"When did it close down?" my friend shot another irritating question.

"You are very cynical," I said.

"If the brick kiln had closed down it would not have been necessary for me to make this case study, you see. If you care for facts, let me tell you that the brick kiln at the first year of its operation sold 16,43,725 bricks and made a net profit of Rs. 9,037. Next year the profit was to the tune of Rs. 10,520 and in 1963-64 the number of bricks sold and profit made were 30,25,559 and Rs. 17,012 respectively."

"Splendid."

"You are right for the first time," I said smilingly. "Now listen. The brick kiln started giving dividend to the members out of its profit each year. No rate was fixed and with the increase in profit the rate of dividend also increased. Out of the total net profit of the year 10 per cent goes to the funds of Gram Sabha. The balance is divided as dividend to the share holders. During 1961-62, dividend was paid at the rate of 76 per cent of paid up share capital; this increased to 90 per cent during 1962-63 and to 140 per cent during 1963-64."

"But how the community was benefited from the brick kiln. Some people got good return on their investment, that's all," my friend remarked.

"Don't be in a hurry to arrive at such conclusions. Perhaps you would be glad to know that the brick kiln helped the Panchayat to complete 4.5 km pucca brick pavement in all the three villages. Now it is no problem to move from one place to another during the rainy season. Moreover, the village Mandoli has been connected with a 1.5 km pucca road. A Community Centre worth about Rs. 7,000 has been completed. Three culverts have been constructed to link roads. One Panchayat Ghar-cum-primary school building worth Rs. 5,500 has been completed. Besides, seven new wells have been constructed in the three villages and

one old tank repaired. With the easy availability of bricks most of the pucca construction works have been completed in the three villages of Gram Sabha."

"The villages with the improvement of their financial position are now resorting to pucca construction. All the seventy families requiring feeding troughs have constructed pucca ones for their cattle. All the share holders have constructed at least one or two pucca rooms. Many of them have built pucca houses particularly in village Gola-Kuwan all the fifteen families have constructed pucca houses for their use. Besides, ten pucca compost pits have been constructed. Now have you any thing to comment."

"No comments", my friend replied, "I am beginning to change my opinion."

"The story is not yet finished," I continued. "The panchayat has chalked out a plan for the all-round development of the three villages. The Panchayat wants to start a junior High School for which the building is lying ready. Only Zila Parishad's help is required to depute trained teachers. Malihabad Block is famous for dussehri mangoes. This Gram Sabha wants to run a fruit preservation centre for which the building is readily available. Only trained staff and machinery are required."

"The Gram Sabha in its land wants to construct pucca shops for letting them to shopkeepers. It is the intention to start a bi-weekly market at Gram Panchayat level at village Gola-Kuwan."

"Besides, all the seven newly constructed wells will be attached with two bath rooms—one for males and another for females. The Gram Panchayat has also a plan to bore hand pumps in the houses of those who will pay water tax to it. The Panchayat renders help to the farmers who want to construct pucca compost pits."

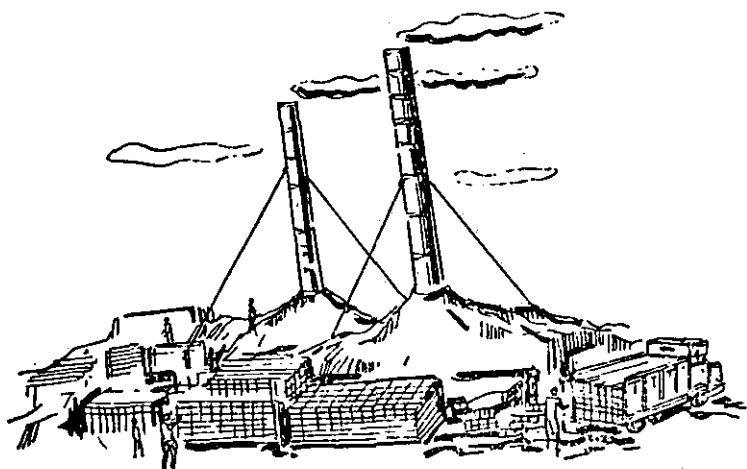
"I don't think bricks are so paying as to enable the Panchayat to do all these," my friend interrupted.

"You are right once again. The brick kiln is not the only source of this Panchayat, led by a man like Shri Hemraj. The Panchayat sells the portion of a river falling within its jurisdiction for fishing. From 1963 till now the Panchayat has earned

Rs. 3,200 from this sale. It also sells grass grown on its land for fodder and thus makes an annual income of Rs. 350. Then land revenue at the rate of 3 Paise per rupee fetches Rs. 120 a year. Besides, in the barren land of about 72 acres belonging to Gram Panchayat the Soil Conservation Department has planted 12,000 timber plants, the growth of which is very encouraging. In about 15 to 20 years' time this will start adding to the fund of the Panchayat. Now are you happy?"

My friend stared at me for a while and then said, "Yes, but can you tell me how many Pradhans in the country are like Shri Hemraj?"

"You are incorrigible," I replied.



CHAPTER II

2. NEW LAUREL FOR GANAPAVARAM

Best Panchayat Samiti in Andhra Pradesh

I WONDER HOW many people noticed the news that Ganapavaram Panchayat Samiti in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh got an award of Rs. 25,000 from the State Government for being the best Panchayat Samiti in the State for the year 1964-65. I am also sure Ganapavaram is not even a name to most of the people in our country. But the people of Ganapavaram are happy rather proud of their achievement. They are proud because they have curbed out for themselves a place of distinction in the country's history of progress. They are proud because they have not lagged behind in the noble task of nation-building.

Ganapavaram Panchayat Samiti has achieved all-round progress in various fields of development. It has implemented various schemes under works programme in developing the villages, improving the facilities and increasing the standard of living of the community as a whole with active participation of the village Panchayats as well as the public.

Agricultural production in the Samiti area has been stepped up by using improved implements, providing irrigation facilities, supply of fertilisers, introducing latest techniques of paddy cultivation and giving financial aid and improved seeds to the ryots. As a result of these an additional production of 1,40,000 bags of paddy valued at Rs. 42,00,000 has been realised benefiting 8,329 families.

Due to the maintenance of improved poultry by taking necessary measures to check diseases in the birds, use of deep litter system, proper care of the layersehs, the average expenditure has been reduced and the annual income of the villagers has been increased. The local cattle stock is being upgraded and the quality of breed improved by effective functioning of artificial insemination centres in the Samiti. Pisciculture in this Samiti is playing

an important role in helping the villagers to earn more. Fingerlings costing Rs. 6,200 were supplied to 15 Gram Panchayats and Rs. 3,050 to private parties on 50 per cent contribution basis. The rural industries such as tanning, tailoring and dress making, hand pounding, brick making, weaving and carpentry etc. were encouraged and assisted by the Samiti to improve the economic lot of the villagers.

The Samiti lays much importance on education. It is determined to wipe away illiteracy from the area under its jurisdiction. There are 68 basic and 57 non-basic schools in this Samiti. The Samiti gives a monetary aid at the rate of Rs. 5 per child belonging to the scheduled castes and backward tribes and supplies text books to them free of cost. Mid-day meals in cooperation with CARE organisation and public have been introduced in 11 villages covering 1,250 students. Free supply of milk is being made in three pre-basic and nursery schools under the management of Panchayat Samiti. Twelve adult literacy centres have been started and 58 youth clubs organised in this Samiti area.

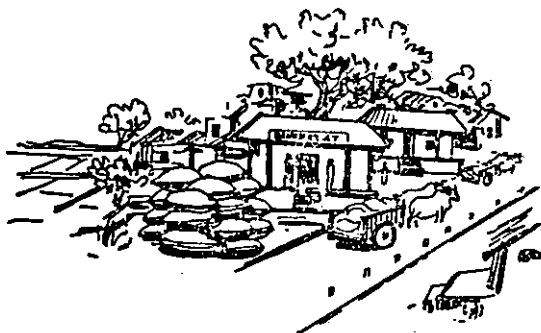
The Samiti has also played an important role in developing communications. The village around Kollair Lake remained isolated from other parts of the district for want of communication facilities. The Samiti formed village and intra-village roads. It is interesting to note that the transport charges for a bag of paddy from the Kollair Lake village to marketing centres have been reduced from Rs. 3 to 50 Paise due to the improved communication facilities. Thousands of bags of paddy are now transported from this Samiti area to the marketing centres without any difficulty. The Samiti deepened 38 tanks to provide drinking water facilities at an expenditure of Rs. 80,000 out of which Rs. 38,000 were paid as a grant and the balance contributed by village Panchayats and the people by way of shramdan.

Out of 58 Panchayats under this Samiti protected water supply schemes have been taken up in 39 villages as sanctioned by the Government.

There are 46 Mahila Mandals in this Samiti. Four Mandals are maintaining maternity centres. Most of the Panchayats in this Samiti are covered by telephones.

The Alampuram Panchayat in this Samiti was adjudged the best in the district level and was accordingly awarded Rs. 5,000 by the State Government. The Radio Rural Forum at Kasba-Pentapadu in this Samiti was adjudged the best forum in the district level and Rs. 500 worth of agricultural implements were given to it by the Zila Parishad.

Ganapavaram, as the above account shows is thus determined to play its role in ushering in a better India. If one comes to Ganapavaram, he is sure to get an idea how India of tomorrow is going to shape.



CHAPTER III

3. HAREOLI COMES TO LIMELIGHT

HAREOLI, a small village in Kanjhawala Block of the Union Territory of Delhi today presents a picture quite different from that of Hareoli of 1960. The village then was in a poor and shabby condition. It had a dingy appearance on account of its insanitary wells, dirty lanes, stagnant ponds and dilapidated houses. The farm output was low and the villagers were leading a life of poverty. About fifty per cent of the families were involved either in civil or criminal litigations. The village had no proper Panchayat Ghar or Community Centre and no school.

It was in the later months of 1959 that a Panchayat was formed in the village. It took some months before it started its actual work. In 1960 under its active and young Pradhan, Shri Tara Chand, the Panchayat assumed its real role. Since then a silent revolution is taking place in the village and villagers are marching forward to more and more prosperity with the passing of each day.

Today the attitude of the inhabitants has radically changed and the life in the village has completely transformed. Hareoli has emerged from its obscurity to limelight. Within these five years the village has twice won for itself the first place in the villages of the Union Territory of Delhi, for its grand achievements and successes towards the fulfilment of physical, emotional and ethical targets of the Plan.

In order to bring this revolutionary change, Shri Tara Chand, the young Pradhan of the village Panchayat, left no stone unturned. The first task which engaged his attention was to create a homely atmosphere in the village. To achieve this, he, along with other members of the Panchayat, went from door to door asking people to assemble for discussions on the problems facing the village. Many sittings were held at night, in which he and other members of the Panchayat tried to convince the people that if they actually desired to raise their standard of living they must

first resolve their differences. This was no easy task, because many a time they were countered with such bitter charges which no one could swallow easily. Yet the devotion, selfless effort, unlimited patience and abundant self-confidence of the Pradhan paid him the dividends. These numerous long sittings neither baffled him nor made him desperate. He along with other members of the Panchayat, continued his good work with full zeal and confidence and within a year was able to achieve his object. By this time all the cases pending in various law courts were withdrawn by the parties concerned.

When asked how he achieved this success, he simply said, "Our Bapu, Mahatma Gandhi won the independence of the country through non-violence and by uniting the people of India. I visualized that I must unite the people of my village in order to make it happy and prosperous. With this object in view I worked zealously to win the confidence of my people and used love as the weapon of attack to do away their misgivings." On many occasions he had to take resort to fast in order to persuade people to resolve their disputes.

The homely atmosphere when once created, paved the way for the development activities. The villagers with their meagre resources soon constructed a Panchayat Ghar, a school, a seed store and a temple through their labour. They received a matching grant from the Block Development Officer in all these endeavours. The work of paving the streets was also taken in hand and thus all streets were reconstructed.

After providing all the basic amenities to the village, the Panchayat took up the construction of a ghat on the canal running nearby. The village lacked drinking water facilities for its herd of cattle. Since long it was felt that a ghat on the canal could assure the necessary provision. So five years back, the villagers had deposited a sum of Rs. 1,037 with the canal authorities for this purpose. The Panchayat was in no need to wait further for some action on the part of the canal authorities and engaged itself in the execution of this project. A sum of Rs. 3,000 was spent for procuring bricks, cement and other necessary material and within fifteen days the work which was anxiously awaited for five years was completed. The villagers' delight knew no bounds on this unique achievement.

When the country was suddenly attacked by China Hareoli responded to the call of the Nation and raised itself to meet the mighty challenge. It organised a Village Volunteer Force and contributed generously towards the National Defence Fund. Meetings of the Gaon Sabha and Goan Panchayats were called and measures for increasing production were discussed. In addition to making use of improved seeds and fertilizers, the meetings recommended the maximum use of available canal water. A plan was drawn up and with the help of the Village Volunteer Force about 9½ miles long feeder channels were dug, thereby enabling every cultivator to irrigate his land. The main hurdle to be crossed was that of Bar-Bandi, or the preference in allotting the canal water. To please the canal authorities many cultivators used to spend hundreds of rupees and their valuable time for this preference. This difficult problem was settled by the Panchayat after many prolonged sittings and continuous persuasions. Thus the whole land was brought under irrigation.

By digging the channels and settling Bar-Bandi's several hundreds of rupees which used to be spent in litigations and bribery were saved. Due to all these efforts the crop production increased by about 50 per cent in the Rabi season, thus enabling cultivators to pay their old debts. Besides, it helped them to serve their country through increased production. Here, again, the Pradhan and other members of the Panchayat gave lead to the village by first donating the land for the water courses. Their self-sacrifice made others to follow suit.

Soon after the Chinese aggression, the village faced the problem of water-logging due to heavy rains. This was rather a new problem which the village had never faced before, and this unexpected happening more or less baffled the villagers and they were at their wit's end.

They approached the Development Department for a solution, as the area under water was getting saline day by day and losing its fertility.

The authorities surveyed the area and prepared an ambitious scheme, which required many fields to be intersected to drain out the water, costing many thousands of rupees. This expensive

scheme actuated the villagers for the look out of some simple scheme instead. By putting all heads together, the Panchayat was at last able to suggest a simple proposal to the Development Commissioner. It was suggested that a syphon should be put under the canal and other minor water channels. The village volunteered to dig a drain about $1\frac{1}{2}$ furlongs long. At this, the Development Commissioner visited the site and agreed to the proposal.

Within a week the Panchayat got the required drain dug and the department put up a syphon under the canal and minor channels at a very little cost to the Government. The proposal worked well and every one felt happy at the solution. The villagers were assured of a good crop in the Kharif season and they could as well hope for a good crop in Rabi.

Once a notorious village, Hareoli now is moving forward on the path of progress. The persons one meets in the village are really well-behaved, cooperative, arduous, and inspired. Harijans in the village, mix freely with the other population and do not feel themselves as untouchables. They get all the help they require, from the fellow villagers. Under a dynamic and inspiring leadership, the village now breathes the real spirit of dynamic community life.



CHAPTER IV

4. STORY OF THREE PANCHAYATS : MEHSANA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS PLENTY

"Are you really interested in seeing what Panchayati Raj has brought to our people?" asked my Gujarati friend.

"I am. But somehow I feel that nothing significant has been done to improve the economic lot of the rural people through Panchayats," I said.

"You are wrong as wrong can be," replied my friend.

Now after a hurried tour of Mehsana, a prosperous district of Gujarat, I realise how wrong I was. The people of Mehsana are engaged heart and soul in creating a better atmosphere for achieving posterity. They are determined to wipe away with their strong hands all the evils—the worst of which is poverty. I have now nothing but reverence for the sturdy people of Mehsana.

I paid my first visit to Gozaria, the most prosperous village of the three I could manage to see during my short tour of Mehsana. The village, with a population of 8,560 has made tremendous progress in agriculture. It has a total cultivable area of 4,434 acres. Crops like wheat, bajra, cotton, are grown in Gozaria. A number of orchards in the village yield delicious guava in abundance. For irrigation the village has 120 pumping sets.

There is a multi-purpose cooperative society in the village to meet the requirements of its people. A milk producers' co-operative society is also working satisfactorily.

The village Panchayat is one of the most active Panchayats in the State. All its fifteen members have been elected uncontested. This shows their popularity and the people's faith in their ability. The Panchayat has constructed a Panchayat House, known as Janta Ghar, at a cost of Rs. 14,000.

Gozaria attaches high importance to education. Besides one high school, the village has one Kumarsihala (Primary school for boys) and one Kanyashala (Primary school for girls). About 2,000 children are studying in these schools.

The village has been electrified. It has also a Post Office and a Telegraph Office. Gozaria boasts of its well-built mandi (market place) where brisk trade to the tune of Rs. 1 crore takes place annually, yielding a high revenue to the Panchayat. The village is also doing remarkably well in handloom industry.

There is a modern well-equipped hospital at Gozaria. It has X-ray department, surgical ward, maternity ward and an ophthalmic ward.

I was tremendously impressed when I met the people of Gozaria. I found them cooperative, conscientious and ever eager to improve their village. When I said, "you have done a good job," they all shouted "We want to do better."

My next stop was at village Ambaliasam. It is a small village inhabited by 1,695 people. Panchayat is not a new thing to the people of this village. A panchayat was in existence during their great-great-grand fathers' time, the people claimed. But they admitted that the benefits of the Panchayat started coming to them only after the establishment of the present Panchayati Raj.

The Panchayat has two women panches. It has an annual income of Rs. 13,594. In spite of this limited financial resources the Panchayat has rendered significant service to the people of the village. It has constructed two water reservoirs. The village has a primary school and also a high school. There are also a community centre, a Radio Rural Forum, and a library with a reading room in the village.

A small cooperative society has been established to give credit to the farmers. It also distributes cement. The cooperative society is doing well and is expected to become a multipurpose one in the near future.

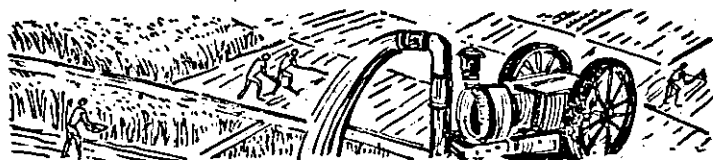
The Sarpanch was all praise for the people. "They are energetic and keen to implement any scheme chalked out by the Panchayat," he said. No wonder, this tiny village is gradually reaching its goal of plenty.

The last village on my itinerary was Padharia, the smallest of the three visited by me. The village with a population of 1,305, is still struggling to get out of its age-long poverty. But the people have not lost heart. With grim determination they are marching forward—they want to leave behind a village far better than the one they had.

The village has a total cultivable land of 1,554 acres, which yields bajra, jowar, cotton, groundnut, wheat, pulses and vegetables. The land is irrigated with the help of wells fitted with eleven pumping sets.

The Panchayat has made a plan to construct a Panchayat Bhavan, a primary school and a library.

Padharia is small in size but not in spirit. It will surely reach the goal of prosperity and plenty.



CHAPTER V

5. HIVARKHED—A MODEL VILLAGE

At the foot of the Satpuras in Maharashtra, you will come across a small village which may not seem to be impressive at all. But if you have time to know something about this village which is situated in Telhara Development Block of Akot Taluka in Akola district you will find that Hivarkhed—that is the name of the village—is one of the model villages—“tiny Ends” in the words of Gandhiji—in the country. Yes, that is what Hivarkhed is. It has been declared the best village of Maharashtra.

Hivarkhed has a population of 8,767. And the people have taken an honest oath to change the face of the village. Their only means for this is self-help. Most of the development works in the village are done through shramdam in which men and women, young and old take part without any hesitation. They have dug 350 compost pits, made 175 bunds, built 1,287 ft. long approach road to Karla and 1,165 ft. long approach road to Talegaon. All these works in terms of cash would have cost them Rs. 16,000.

Hivarkhed's prosperity is due to the intensive cultivation done by its people. The total cultivable land runs into 5,647 acres. Hivarkhed mainly produces plantations, grapes, betel leaves, chillies, vegetables, cotton and groundnut. The farmers have rightly realised that production can be increased only through improved techniques, seeds and implements. They use chemical fertilizers liberally. For irrigating their fields, the farmers of this village have purchased 48 pumps out of which 43 are electrically operated and five by diesel.

The Panchayat under the inspired leadership of its Sarpanch, Shri Sahdeva Narain Rao Bhole is doing a remarkable job. The Panchayat which came into being in 1950 has fifteen members out of whom two are women. The Panchayat has a unique record of collecting cent per cent land revenue. It has made adequate

arrangement for drinking water. There are 24 public wells in the village. The Panchayat is now considering a plan for supplying tap water. Electricity came to the village in 1962.

Thanks to the Panchayat a thirteen-mile long pucca road has been built to connect Hivarkhed with Akot. The village has a clean look with pucca drains. The Panchayat has implemented a novel plan for keeping the village clean and maintaining improved sanitation. The owners of houses located near the pucca drain are required to bear half of the cost of the drain's construction, while the remaining half is borne by the Panchayat. The village unlike many villages in the country has 400 latrines. The scavengers do not carry night soil on their heads, barrows are provided for this purpose. Very soon Ratnagiri type latrines will be introduced in the village. Due to all these sanitary facilities Hivarkhed recently escaped the epidemic of cholera when the whole of Akola was down with it.

The Panchayat pays great attention to education. The village has one primary school, an Urdu school, a girls' school and a Middle school. The Panchayat was adjudged the best in respect of shramdan, administration and small savings in Block-level competitions.

The village has raised a Village Volunteer Force consisting of about hundred members which takes active part in all development works. Besides, there are Bhajan Mandal, Balwadi, Mahila Mandal and Kreedha Mandal which provide recreation to the inhabitants of the village. There is also Radio Rural Forum.

Hivarkhed offers modern amenities to its people. Situated against a scenic background this village is an ideal place to live in. It gives an indication of what the rural India of tomorrow will look like.



CHAPTER VI

6. SHAHPUR : A NOBLE EFFORT

NO OBSTACLE can deter the people from reaching their goal if they are determined to attain it. This has been proved by the people of Shahpura Panchayat Samiti in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. They are determined to play their part in the country-wide struggle for wiping away food scarcity. Scanty rains, lack of irrigation facilities, hard soil, nothing could pose an unsurmountable difficulty for them. Today Shahpura is well known as a village of brave and resolute people.

The people of Shahpura have shown how determined they are to increase food output. The bed of Umaid Sagar dam, which is about three miles from Shahpura was lying dry due to scanty rains this year. The drought has almost destroyed the kharif crop.

The total storage capacity of Umaid Sagar dam is 477 million cft. and it can provide irrigation to about 4,000 acres. But this year the dam was not filled even to one-fourth of its capacity. Yet the morale of cultivators is at the highest pitch and their determination to meet this challenge thrown by nature with hard labour has been rather strengthened.

The cultivators of this area have accepted the scarcity of water in the dam as a boon and cultivated wheat in the bed which ordinarily remained submerged under water. The revenue authorities have allotted about 700 acres of land to cultivators of adjoining villages where there had been no crops due to bad weather. The Panchayat Samiti has provided its own tractor for breaking the hard soil and ploughing.

But this was not enough. The parched soil was thirsty and water had to be provided to quench its thirst. The Panchayat Samiti and cultivators joined together to solve this problem. A canal, about one mile long, was dug in the bed to bring water to upper reaches and by installing pumping sets the water was lifted from this canal and fields were irrigated. All out of eleven

pumping sets working at present in the bed area, three have been provided by the Panchayat Samiti and the rest have been purchased by villagers with the taccavi loan advanced for the purpose by the Samiti.

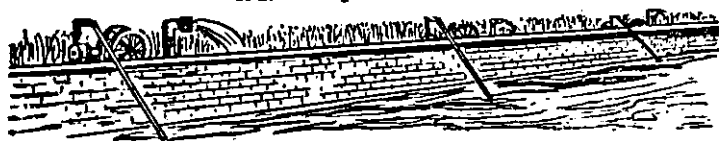
When I visited the bed area, it was buzzing with activities. The noise of pumping sets and tractors and tinkling sound of bells round the neck of bullocks created a peculiar symphony. I saw the undaunted cultivators engaged in their fight against all odds. I was overwhelmed. As I was painting an imaginory picture of plentiful tomorrow which was emerging out of combined efforts of men and machines, a grasshopper just flew and sat on my arm. I showed it to the Vikas Adhikari, who was standing by. Immediately, he began to call the cultivators at the highest pitch of his voice. About fifteen cultivators gathered before him. I was looking blankly at the face of Vikas Adhikari which had turned pale at the very first sight of that grasshopper.

The Vikash Adhikari pointing towards the field where wheat seeds had already begun sprouting asked the amazed cultivators—“Have you noticed that the grasshoppers have come up to your fields? If you do not take adequate steps to check this menace you will not be able to harvest even as much as you have sown”. The cultivators nodded their heads in agreement but a question mark on their face could easily be read as to ‘how’. The Vikas Adhikari advised them in their local dialect to spray 10 per cent B. C. before sowing in their fields. And he immediately asked the Village Level Worker to bring the pesticide from the headquarters and make available to them.

Those who were not able to install a pumping set of their own, have arranged to take water from their neighbouring cultivators and pay charges at the rate of Rs. 2.50 per hour. A cultivator told me that about a bigha of land could be irrigated in an hour.

The people of Shahpura have begun a glorious fight. They are bound to win. When I bade them good bye the sun was almost touching the western horizon. The sky was tinged red with

its last rays. The sun seemed to be paying glorious tributes to these brave sons of the soil and writing of their heroic deeds in different hues on the vast expanse of the sky.



CHAPTER VII

7. KRISHNAVARAM, AN IDEAL VILLAGE

KRISHNAVARAM is a tiny village under Kallur Samiti in Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh. It has a population of 2,200 scattered in about 380 households; yet it has a high school, a primary school, a hostel, a Panchayat Ghar, a Mahila Mandali, a Youth Club, a Bhajan Mandali, a veterinary hospital, a co-operative society and Kodanda Rama temple, constructed purely on people's shramdan and contributions. No doubt, these popular achievements are fruits of united efforts of the Panchayat and villagers.

The village Panchayat came into being in 1959 with six Panches (including Sarpanch). But now the Panchayat has nine Panches. There is absolute unity in the village which is evident from the elections of Panchayat which have been held uncontested since its inception. All the resolutions in the meetings of Panchayat are adopted unanimously. The Panches show keen interest in the administration of Panchayat. No single member is found absent in any meeting conducted by the Panchayat from time to time. This unity has impressed all the nearby villages.

Krishnavaram has another unique record to its credit. There is no litigation in the village. When asked, the Up-sarpanch Sri Ramachandra Rao could recollect that only four persons had gone to a court of law to settle their disputes. Now the villagers are determined not to go to a court of law, but to settle the disputes amicably through peaceful negotiations. They set up a committee to settle disputes arising from time to time. The decision of this committee is final.

Krishnavaram Panchayat takes special interest in tax collection. There are no taxes left uncollected. It has been collecting cent per cent taxes since 1962-63.

Agriculture

In the field of agriculture, the record of achievement of the villagers is noteworthy. The farmers of the village adopted scientific methods of cultivation and applied chemical fertilizers to their

fields. During 1963-64 they used 8,685 kg. of new variety of paddy seed, and 253 kg. of hybrid jowar. They applied 3,000 kg. of nitrate, 41,850 kg. of urea, 31 tons of superphosphate, 11,220 kg. of ammonium phosphate. Almost every house can boast of a compost pit. Though the villagers have used chemical fertilizers, they rely more on green manure. The Japanese method of cultivation was introduced in farm fields. Pump-sets with oil engines were installed to cultivate more land. There are eight oil engines in this small village. The cooperative society is advancing loans to ryots in consultation with the Panchayat. The ryots of the village maintain a seed farm. The produce of the seed farm was also supplied to ryots of neighbouring villages. Thus the villagers earned profits.

Education

The Panchayat is trying its best to eradicate illiteracy. It has set up one primary school and one high school in the village. All the children of school-going age have been enrolled in the primary school. New buildings have been constructed for both the schools.

The villagers have donated Rs. 12,188 for school building works. They purchased land, which cost Rs. 7,205 and donated for the high school. Besides this, they contributed a radio, and a wall clock to the high school. The Mahila Mandali is one of the voluntary organisations in the village. The total membership is 35. It maintains a sewing centre. It is striving to better the economic condition of the villagers. It has an Ambar Charkha centre. Spinning has been taught to 50 women. Now, each trainee is earning 0.75 paise per day. A sewing machine was supplied on half cost by Kalluru Samiti. Twenty women are undergoing training in the centre. Literacy classes are conducted, as a step to eradicate illiteracy among women folk. The Panchayat maintains a library for the children separately. There are 320 books in the Library, which have been donated by the villagers. Gram Lakshmi training camp was also organised by the Samiti authorities.

The villagers extended their wholehearted cooperation in the construction of a Panchayat Ghar. Sri Kodimela Ramachandra Rao, the then Patel contributed 30 cents of land to the Panchayat

for the construction of the Ghar. The villagers also have their own share of contribution to the extent of Rs. 3,000. Now the panchayat has its own building.

Kodanda Rama Temple

Kodanda Rama Temple is in the heart of the village. All the villagers took part in the construction of the temple. They contributed Rs. 15,000 for the purpose. No financial assistance was sought from the Government. The villagers have appointed a priest whom they pay Rs. 100 per month. The priest has also been provided with a free accommodation.

Very recently, about Rs. 4,000 were spent by the people to erect dhwaja sthambham (a pillar erected before the temple). The villagers also donated 4 tolas of gold to the temple.

The harijan colony is another landmark at Krishnavaram. The Panchayat and the villagers worked together in ameliorating the conditions of the down-trodden people. Twelve acres of land was donated by Sri Kodimela Ramachandra Rao. The Government also gave monetary aid to the harijans to build their own houses. They have built their own houses through shramdan, utilising the financial help of the Government. The Panchayat laid roads in the harijan colony. Drinking water facilities were also provided. As a result, the harijan-wada has taken a new outlook.

The harijans receive more sympathetic treatment from the entire village community of Krishnavaram. The villagers pay utmost attention to the education of the harijans. The harijans are economically poor. The villagers are providing boarding and lodging to the harijan students. To provide hostel facilities, a hostel committee has been formed. A hostel was established in 1959. Free boarding and lodging facilities were extended both to local and outside harijan students. There are 66 students in the hostel. The Government sanctions 42 boarding grants to the hostel. The villagers are meeting the expenditure for the remaining 24 students. The hostel is situated in a thatched house, which has seven rooms. Each room was donated by a villager. But the accommodation was insufficient to the boarders. The villagers

decided to provide another thatched house. They approached one Sri Ramachandra Rao for land. He donated land which is adjacent to the hostel. They constructed another thatched house. They decided to construct a permanent building for the hostel.

Besides these distinctions Krishnavaram has also a number of proud records to its credit. It has purchased a community radio set. In addition to that, it started a library in the village. The villagers contributed books to the library. There are 1,200 books in the library. It also established one rural veterinary centre. The village has metalled roads. There is a proposal to tar the present road, which touches Aswaraopeta-Khammam Road.

Unity, progressive ideas, determination among the people to work hard are the factors of success of Krishnavaram village.

The credit of Krishnavaram's all-round development goes to its Panchayat, functioning under the inspired leadership of Sri Udantaneni Satyam, the Sarpanch of the Panchayat. In addition to his leadership, the indomitable spirit of the people and the generosity of Sri Ramachandra Rao, who liberally donated for every activity in the village, have placed Krishnavaram on the list of the best Panchayats in Khammam district. It was rightly declared the best Panchayat of the district in 1964-65.

The village Krishnavaram has set a noble example before its counterparts in the country.



CHAPTER VIII

8. STORY OF KALANAUR

Kalanaur has once again leapt into fame. This tiny village on the Indo-Pakistan border in Dhariwal Block of Gurdaspur district in Punjab is well known in the Indian history as the place where Akbar—the Great Moghul—was enthroned on the advice of his courtiers. Even today a place called Takht-e-Akbari draws tourists. During Moghul days, Kalanaur was a very busy town on Delhi-Srinagar road. But with the course of time Kalanaur turned into a deserted town—just a historical name. Its land lay barren—about 3,000 acres were saline and known as Rakkar in local dialect. Only poisonous snakes and lizards called Sahnar by the local people moved freely in this wast wilderness. Nobody dared to cultivate this land.

‘I have not seen any one tilling this land’, said a ninety-year old man.

Nobody tilled the Rakkar of Kalanaur—not even after the river Rani had overflowed in 1955 and deposited silt ranging from 3 in. to 6 in. deep. While consolidating land in Punjab in 1956-57 about 1,400 acres of this area were set apart as Shamlat land.

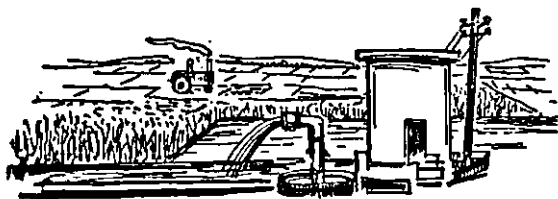
But Kalanaur could not be allowed to remain unusable under the present circumstances. When the whole country is striving to wipe away food scarcity for ever, land at Kalanaur could not be allowed to go waste. The Block officials were eager to bring this land under plough—to bring back humming activity once again to this sleeping village.

To start with, the soil of 1,000 acres under possession of the local panchayat was tested and found suitable for cultivation. But the first obstacle was to get prospective cultivators who could undertake this big project on their own. The Panchayat with its inadequate resources was not in a position for this venture. After persistent efforts one party was persuaded to undertake this task at a nominal lease of Rs. 10 per acre per annum. Two hundred

acres were leased to this party which consisted of five energetic young farmers. They came forward to upturn the virgin soil to do their duty to the country. Luck favoured them. The tubewell they bored gave sufficient water to irrigate the land. This news of their good fortune spread rapidly and lessees came in sufficient number.

The sturdy farmers of Punjab have restored Kalanaur to its place of prestige. Today Kalanaur is a vast stretch of green. If you go to Dera Baba Nanak from Gurdaspur you will find tractors roaring on both sides of the road, tubewells are being bored here and there and the fields are smiling. Of course you would be greeted by smiling farmers. They are happy in their success. With their strong hands they have made barren land fertile. The most remarkable aspect of the whole project is that no Government help has been sought for its implementation. The farmers with their sweat and money have done this miracle. The Panchayat has been assured of a steady annual income of Rs. 10,000 as lease money. And production? Kalanaur is expected to provide the country with 40,000 maunds of additional food-grains each year.

That is not all. Kalanaur has set a noble example before all. The farmers of Kalanaur have shown that with sincere and concerted efforts we can make food scarcity of today a thing of the past.



CHAPTER IX

9. JARGALI AND PADADHARA: TWO PROGRESSIVE PANCHAYATS OF GUJARAT

It is heartening to note the tremendous impact made by Panchayati Raj on the simple and sturdy village people living in the interior of Gujarat. I, however, could visit only two Panchayats, Jargali and Padadhara. But at both places I found the same spirit, same zeal to move forward. The Community Development Programme has shaken the people from their age-long stupor and put them on the path towards progress. There is no longer looking back for them.

Jargali

Jargali, an interior village of the Junagarh district has a population of not more than 2,000. Since the inception of the Panchayat in 1951, the people of Jargali have been working for the welfare and uplift of the village. The farmers and artisans, all alike, have been striving hard to improve their economic lot and thus create a better living atmosphere for the posterity. I was impressed to find how every individual was imbued to the spirit of sacrifice for the community. The well-being of the village receives priority over individual interest.

Neat and well-lit street, tidy and well-maintained public places and well-organised village institutions speak emphatically of the efficiency of the Panchayat and the cooperation of the people.

In the earlier days of the Panchayat the people constructed a Panchayat Ghar, a public sanitary well, a three-roomed school building with a compound wall, causeways on the approach roads, and a recreation centre for the children. The zeal with which they could pool their resources for all these activities in the first few years of the Panchayat's existence is exemplary.

Jargali has been blessed with a fertile and productive land. The farmers are enthusiastic enough to welcome the improved techniques of cultivation such as use of better seeds, improved implements, spraying of insecticides etc. Wheat and bajra are the main cereal crops, while cotton, sugarcane and groundnut are grown as cash crops.

The credit for the spectacular rise in agricultural production goes mostly to the youth of the village. They are enlightened and energetic and keen to accept and adopt, within their mite, every programme of agricultural, educational and cultural advancement. They serve as an effective instrument of propagation and implementation of the Panchayat plans and programmes. The organisation of Gram Raksha Dal, community listening centre, Key village service centre, and Ras-Mandal are some of the major activities of the Panchayat; crowning them all is, of course, the successful implementation of prohibition in the village.

Padadhara

Padadhara is a very small village in the Taluka of Vankaner, inhabited by hardly three hundred souls. It is small in size but not in spirit. It has the same ambition for a better life—an ambition which has been roused by independence of the country.

Despite its meagre resources, this tiny village, first of all, built a Panchayat Ghar, through Samuhik Shramdan of its entire population. The Panchayat later constructed a community platform, a public sanitary well, a chabutara, a village-gate, and a primary school building. The enthusiastic people of Padadhara also gave a lead in forming a multi-purpose cooperative group society serving five other villages in the neighbourhood. The society procures improved seeds and chemical fertilizers in sufficient quantity for the farmers of these villages and thus helps to get them better yields.

From the very beginning, the Panchayat was quite alive to the basic needs of the people and took measures to meet them one by one.

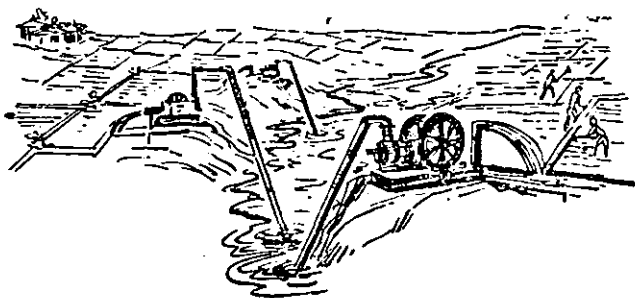
The village people had to experience an acute scarcity of drinking water, and the first task the Panchayat took in hand was the construction of a big well in the bed of the river, which

could provide enough water for drinking purpose all the year round. This well was constructed at a cost of Rs. 5,000 which proved a real boon particularly to the women-folk of the village who had to fetch drinking water previously from a long distance.

Most of the fields surrounding the village Padadhara are on a higher level and could not be irrigated by the normal flow of water. To overcome this difficulty, the Panchayat installed a pumping set by investing Rs. 10,000. The pump lifts water to the required height and irrigates the high level fields of the village. Better irrigation has resulted in better production which has helped in improving the economic lot of the people. Along with the same pumping motor, a flour mill is also being operated thus relieving the women-folk of their daily toil of grinding corn.

During the rainy season, the kuchcha link road of the village used to be practically converted into a stagnant pool of mire and mud and cause great inconvenience to the people in reaching the bus station, situated at the junction of the link road and the main road. The Panchayat, therefore, constructed a pucca cement road through the heart of the village to the bus station.

During my visit to Jargali and Padadhara I did not come across a single person suffering from frustration. Instead I found the people optimistic and confident of their abilities.



CHAPTER X

10. STORY OF A YOUNG FARMER

This is the story of a young farmer, who has done miracles in a village by growing new varieties of ragi and bhindi crops. His name is Shri Krishnappa who has barely crossed his teens.

Krishnappa comes of a poor agriculturist family of Thimmalli village in Harohalli circle of Devanahalli Development Block in Bangalore district of Mysore. After completing his school education, he was admitted in a college. But unfortunately he was compelled to leave the college due to financial difficulties. His father was too poor to pay for his son's higher education. So Krishnappa returned to his village. He was not physically capable of undertaking cultivation himself, but he was intelligent enough to learn the benefits of using better seeds, adequate supply of water for irrigation purposes, the results obtained by putting proper fertilisers and such other improved techniques of cultivation. He came in contact with the local Gram Sevak and sought his advice for increasing yield from his land. He had a garden land of 3 acres and an irrigation well installed with an electrical pump-set.

His father was growing ragi, potato, and mulberry. But the yield was low as compared to the yields of some of the farmers in the neighbouring villages. He knew that due to the old practices followed by his father the output could not be increased. The influence of the Gram Sevak and the impact of intensive agriculture followed by some of the farmers in the neighbouring villages made him apply new practices.

In 1964 he used two improved varieties of Ragi-Aruna and Annapurna along with the local varieties and got an increased yield of 4 quintals per acre. But in spite of his growing desire, he could not spread out his activities as his father being a very conservative farmer did not like the idea.

In 1965 the local Gram Sevak brought Pusa Sawani Bhindi, a new variety and advised the young farmer to try this variety in his farm. The young farmer readily agreed to cultivate this

seed in 16 guntas of land. The yield was 2,002 kgs. The expenditure including the transportation charges to the nearby Bangalore City market was Rs. 256, and the gross income from the total harvest was Rs. 980. His father and the neighbouring farmers were surprised at the result. Now they were convinced that such miracles could be done only through scientific methods.

Krishnappa is now trying his talent in other fields. He is interested in mixed farming. Now he has undertaken sericulture and has constructed a model house for poultry rearing. He has also undergone one month practical training in poultry farming.

Even though he is young in age, he has earned a name in scientific agriculture. He is an example to his colleagues and the neighbouring village farmers. Whenever they seek assistance they rush to this young farmer and take his advice. The country now wants young enthusiastic progressive farmers like Krishnappa, who will lead us to the goal of self-sufficiency in food.



CHAPTER XI

11. LASORIA KHAS : A PROGRESSIVE PANCHAYAT

IN CONNECTION WITH a research work I had to visit Lasoria Khas, a small village in Ashta Block of Sehra district in Madhya Pradesh. It was my first visit and as I had no prior information about the activities of the villagers, I had not come with much expectation. I do not know why I felt that Lasoria Khas was just one of the backward villages.

But I was impressed the very moment I reached the village. It was simply love at first sight. Indeed the neat appearance of the village with its paved roads is bound to impress any visitor.

The village is fortunate to have in the Sarpanch, Shri Laxmi Narain Verma a dedicated man and an ardent social worker. Shri Verma was elected unopposed as the head of the Panchayat in 1954. After three years he handed over the charge to some one else as he wanted to complete his studies. He was, however, back to the helm of affairs in 1964. "In this village the elections are held unopposed", he told me.

Under the inspired leadership of Shri Verma, Lasoria Khas emerged from its dark, squalid existence, and has secured a place among the most progressive villages in the State.

Agriculture is the main occupation in this village. The cultivators now use better seeds, more fertilizers, improved farm practices and other up-to-date methods of agriculture to increase the yield per acre. Lasoria Khas has earned fame as a producer of sugarcane. Some of the cultivators of this village have won State awards by getting the highest yield.

Animal husbandry also receives much attention at Lasoria Khas. The villagers are trying their best to have better breed of cattle and to keep them free from diseases. As they are all vegetarians they are reluctant to take to poultry.

With the rise in income through agriculture the villagers have become more conscious of better living. The village roads are well maintained. Every house is neat and clean. There are sanitary wells which ensure pure drinking water for the villagers.

The people of Lasoria Khas are determined to wipe out illiteracy from the village for ever. There is a primary school for boys and girls. The villagers are eager to raise its standard to that of a Junior High School. The school building has already been constructed by them. Moreover, the village is also running an adult literacy class at night.

Besides a Mahila Mandali and a youth club, which are functioning very smoothly, Lasoria Khas has also a Radio Rural Forum.

The members of the Panchayat meet regularly and all decisions are taken unanimously. There is no litigation in the village. The Panchayat always comes forward to settle an issue to the mutual satisfaction of parties involved.

In all its development work the Panchayat gets spontaneous cooperation from the people. With their cooperation and shramdan the Panchayat has been able to build a Panchayat Ghar, Mahila Samaj Sewa Bhavan, school building and about two-mile long pucca approach road. The Panchayat has unique record of collecting taxes cent per cent.

To ensure better irrigation the Panchayat repaired an old tank at a cost of Rs. 14,000 half of which was contributed by the people by cash and shramdan.

I left Lasoria Khas. I carried with me the sweet memory of the warm hospitality of its people and their heroic struggle to change the face of their village.



CHAPTER XII

12. MEDCHAL DOES IT ONCE AGAIN

MEDCHAL PANCHAYAT Samiti has done it once again. For the second time in its career the Samiti has been declared the best in Hyderabad district (Andhra Pradesh).

Medchal is about 20 miles from Hyderabad. The Panchayat Samiti has within its jurisdiction 43 villages comprising a total area of 275 sq. miles and a population of 92,209.

I had an opportunity to visit Medchal Samiti recently. The story of its success was revealed to me very competently by the Mukhya Sevika and a Progress Assistant. I found from their accounts that Medchal had won laurels twice for its remarkable progress in almost all spheres of community development.

Agriculture

Medchal Samiti for the obvious reason lays stress on the increase of agricultural production. The cultivable land in the Samiti area is 54,970 acres. The local farmers are cultivating half of the land through scientific methods by using better seeds, improved implements and putting other inputs for intensive cultivation. The Samiti has also mobilised its resources, technical knowledge of Extension staff through individuals and Gram Panchayats, to make the grow more food campaign a great success. The Samiti has supplied 1,440 maunds of improved seeds, 19,300 maunds of fertilizers, 18 oil engines and 34 electric motors to the farmers to help them. About 43 minor irrigation schemes have been implemented at a total cost of Rs. 1,03,000. The Samiti also maintain four godowns to store fertilizers and improved seed for distribution to the ryots. About 219 wells have been dug.

The Samiti pays much attention to animal husbandry. The Samiti has supplied 10 improved bulls, eight improved pigs and 550 improved hens. Poultry centres have also been started at Bourampalli Dundigal, Tiranpalli and Turakapalli Panchayats.

The Samiti provides one key village centre, one veterinary dispensary, four rural veterinary dispensaries at different villages. To develop pisciculture in the area the Samiti recently established a fishery.

Medical facilities are also provided by the Samiti to its people. It has one primary health centre at Medchal and four rural health centres at Aliabad, Keshavapuram, Chirial and Shameerapeta.

Education

The Samiti has rightly realised the importance of education. It has introduced compulsory primary education scheme in all the village schools. After the inception of the Samiti, 61 new schools have been opened. The Samiti has now 115 elementary schools under its control. It has enrolled nearly 83 per cent of the children of school going age. To feed the poor children in school, 37 mid-day meal centres have been opened. There is regular attendance of pupils to the schools. The Samiti has constructed 68 permanent buildings for elementary schools. Separate lodging facilities are also provided for lady teachers. The Samiti has taken steps, to form parents' committees to improve the conditions of village schools. These are functioning on sound footing. A common examination scheme for Standard V has also been introduced by the Samiti to improve the educational standard. Every school houses a children's library which is financed by the Samiti.

Library Movement

The Samiti has encouraged all Panchayats to start libraries and reading rooms. Every Panchayat today has a library. The Samiti extends financial assistance to Panchayats to develop their libraries. The Samiti is also organising a Block information centre. Recently the foundation stone was laid for the permanent building of the information centre.

Adult literacy centres are functioning smoothly. Each Panchayat possesses one adult literacy centre. There are five adult literacy centres exclusively for women. In recent years the Samiti started 10 Balwadi centres. The Samiti is maintaining a dress making centre to impart training to poor women in tailoring.

The implementation of expanded nutrition programme is in full swing in the Samiti area. Twenty two poultry centres have been established under this scheme. The Grama Lakshmis are helping the Block authorities in making the scheme a grand success.

Voluntary Organisations

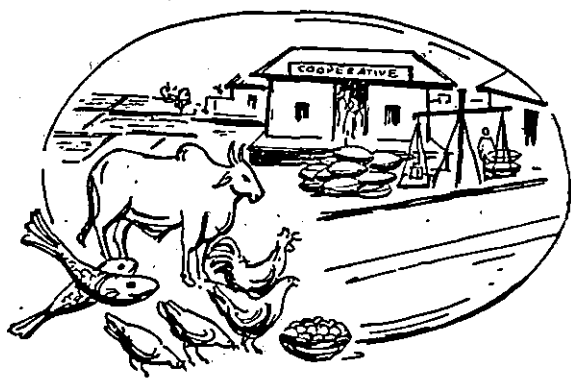
The rural voluntary organisations are playing a very effective role in creating favourable atmosphere for the Samiti to implement all its development plans.

There are 24 Mahila Mandals out of which three have been registered. There is not a single village without a youth club. Each village has a community radio set. Besides, there are separate Block Level organisations for development of poultry, games and sports. These Block level organisations assist their respective village level organisations to implement the programmes and co-ordinate all the works at the Samiti level. Recently, the Samiti published a 60-page brochure depicting the activities of voluntary organisations, undertaken. All the presidents of the respective village organisations are the members in the Samiti-level organisation. The members of respective subject standing committee have been taken as members of the Block level organisation. These Block level organisations review their respective village level organisations. The President of the Samiti takes in spirit the views and suggestions of the Block level organisation and implements them. One rarely comes across a Panchayat Samiti, working on these lines with coordination of all voluntary organisations. The Medchal Samiti organises an exhibition every year at Keesaragutta with the assistance of all organisations.

The Samiti has been able to infuse a spirit of cooperation among the people. About 62 agricultural cooperative societies have been established to better the economic condition of the members. Almost all the farmers' families have come into the fold of cooperation. Every Panchayat in this Samiti is striving to become a model one.

Correct leadership, better co-ordination of people's representatives, social workers and officers, the missionary zeal and enthusiasm of Sri S. Venkatram Reddy and Sri K. Jagadeswarav,

the president and vice-president respectively of the Samiti and dedicated services of a band of social workers such as Smt. Tara Bai, Sri M. Sitaram Reddy, Sri Balawanta Reddy and others, are the factors of this great success of Medchal Samiti in achieving the cherished goal of community development. Every worker in this Samiti is a crusader against poverty, disease, and ignorance. That is why the Samiti has emerged to the forefront and set a noble and inspiring example.



CHAPTER XIII

13. BAYANA PANCHAYAT SAMITI: EARNER OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The fame of Bayana Panchayat Samiti in Rajasthan has already crossed the border of the State and reached all corners of the country. This Samiti is one of the very few Panchayat Samitis which are helping the country to earn valuable foreign exchange.

Recently I had a chance to meet the Pradhan of Bayana Panchayat Samiti, Shri Gopal Ram, who is also a legal practitioner. Shri Gopal Ram feels, quite naturally, proud of the achievements of his Panchayat Samiti.

"You know our Samiti earns valuable foreign exchange for the country", he said when I asked him about Bayana.

"How?"

"By exporting pan (betel leaf) to Ceylon and Pakistan".

"Ah, I remember", I said. "Once I was travelling by Frontier Mail to Bombay. At Bayana Junction I heard the vendor shouting 'Bayana Ka desi pan khaiyega' (please taste betel leaves of Bayana)".

"Three of our Panchayats, Khareri, Bagren and Khan-kheda, cultivate betel vines", the Pradhan said and added with a smile. "Please don't conclude that we live on pan only".

"What other millets do you grow?" I asked.

"In Rabi season our farmers grow wheat, mustard, gram, barley, groundnut, sugarcane, etc. Bajra is the main kharif crop which is cultivated on a wide scale. As our farmers are generally better off the small savings campaign has gained tremendous success within the jurisdiction of our Samiti. Our Samiti stood first in the State-level competition for small savings last year. The amount deposited was about Rs. 6 lakhs. Thrice we won at the district-level competition".

"You must have done a lot to help the farmers". I remarked.

"Oh yes. You see our main duty is to render all help to the farmers. We must awaken them and help them to move forward if we want to have a better India."

"Of course", I said, "kindly tell me what precisely your Samiti has done to improve cultivation."

"We have made a remarkable progress in minor irrigation. We have got one big dam-Bund Baretha—and twenty other small barrages. There are still some under construction. We have started intensive irrigation during the Third plan period. And we hope to double the area of irrigated cultivable land before the Fourth Plan Period commences. Our target is to instal hundred pump sets out of which 35 have already been fixed. Moreover we want to have 300 wells, out of which 130 have already been dug. I take pride in pointing out that we did all these without taking any assistance from the State Government."

"This also proves that our rural people only need correct leadership," I remarked.

The Pradhan blushed. 'No compliments to me, please. The credit goes entirely to our people. I am just their humble servant. Yes, about our Samiti. Kanawar Panchayat of our Samiti stood first in this respect. Five villages under this Panchayat have been completely electrified. Moreover the Panchayat has twelve electric pumps for irrigation."

"What about roads? you know most of our villages are not easily approachable due to lack of good roads." I said.

"We are still struggling to have good roads. At present about one-third of the total area is well knit with roads. Most of the area is mountainous and full of streams which cause heavy damage to roads during the monsoon every year. We are now engaged in constructing a 35-mile approach road from Bayana to Karauli. When completed the road will shorten the distance to Bayana by eight miles. You see, Bayana is situated at the border of two districts—Bharatpur and Swai Madhopur. To start with a four-mile long road has been constructed from Ghunainy (Bharatpur District) to Navalpura (Swai Madhopur district)."

"How you reacted to the recent Pakistani aggression?" I asked to change the topic.

"As in other parts of the country the people of Bayana have also risen to the occasion. With grim determination they are preparing themselves to do their utmost to serve the country. We have raised a Gram Seval for civil defence as well as village development work. Our men have earned distinction in so many spheres. Our Gram Sevak was adjudged the best in the State-level. In the district-level crop competition Shri Harkanni of Encholi, within the jurisdiction of our Samiti, bagged the first prize by producing the highest yield of wheat."

"How I feel tempted to see Bayana", I said.

"You are most welcome," replied Shri Gopal Ram. "You would be surprised to find how Bayana has come out of the dark life it led under the feudal rule before Independence and is now proudly marching towards prosperity. Moreover as a tourist you will find Bayana quite attracting. There is an ancient fort of the Yadavas nearby. There is a temple of Aniruddha, grandson of Krishna. If you are a big game hunter Baretha will offer you a chance to bag a tiger."

"Oh no, I am just a pen pusher", I said; "hunting is not in my line. But I would certainly pay a visit to Bayana to pay my respects to its people."



CHAPTER XIV

14. BULDANA FARMERS FIGHT AGAINST DROUGHT

Buldana district of Maharashtra recently faced an unprecedented drought. But the farmers of the district were not cowed down by this misfortune. They did not remain as helpless victims of God's wrath. Instead, they rose to the occasion. They came forward—old and young—to save their crops, to quench the thirst of their land. Buldana farmers thus have set a noble example before all the farmers in the country.

The farmers tapped all the sources of water—river, mullah, lake and pond—to irrigate their fields in all possible ways. Some cultivators made small canals (Charya) to bring water from the river. They used tin sheets for this purpose where pipes were not available.

One farmer, Sukhdeorao Patil of Sherlanemani village in Khamgaon tehsil built a tank about 20 feet high, to store water in it from the river with the help of an oil pump. He worked round the clock, even at night in the light of petromax—to supply water to about three hundred acres of Kharif crop and six acres of Rabi sown land.

In the neighbouring village about sixteen Banjaras were inspired by Patil and pooled their resources to purchase an oil engine to irrigate about hundred acres. Another farmer, a father of sixteen children, thought old but young in heart, bought an oil engine with all the money he had saved in his life. "If I can satisfy the thirst of my land now, I am sure, it will in its turn feed my big family," the old man said with a smile.

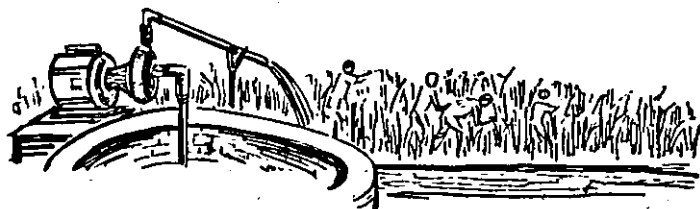
But another old farmer, whom I met at Sangrampur, was not so fortunate. He had not money enough to buy an oil pumping set. He could manage to have two tin boxes and carried water from a neighbouring well from dawn to dusk to irrigate about one acre and a half.

Sinkhedraja Panchayat fought against drought in a big way. It engaged as many as thirty-four engines to bring water from river Khadakpurna to four hundred acres of Kharif and three hundred acres of Rabi crops.

The farmers of Buldana are also endowed with a noble heart. They always come forward to help their fellow cultivators in distress. The way they helped the landless farmers should be an eye-opener to others.

A farmer of Waghapur came forward to feed all the labourers of his village. His noble gesture was followed by well-to-do farmers of Shemba, Khumgaon and Dabhodi who supplied foodgrains to the labourers.

Shri Govindrao Kalal, a cultivator of Mandardi in Jalgaon tehsil offered twelve acres of land along with a well fitted with a pumping set to the landless labourers of his village so that they could cultivate it and share the crop produced. Similarly, Shri Shaligram Budichand of Sangrampur Panchayat Samiti parted with 20 acres of his land for the landless labourers. Shri K. R. Patil of Palsizansi, Shri Kashirao of Bhen and Shri Kisanrao Patil of Changephal offered about one hundred acres to the landless labourers for one year cultivation.



CHAPTER XV

15. MELUR PANCHAYAT FORGES AHEAD

Our Jeep was moving along the village road slowly. The tall coconut and arecanut trees greeted us. As far as the eyes could see there were trees and trees and pepper vines. They had a magnetic charm. I could never take my eyes away from them. "Perhaps you would like to know how this road was built." I was startled when I heard the voice of the Panchayat President. "I would love to," I said, "Well it is quite an interesting story" he began.

When the construction of the road was taken up in the village the land owners were vociferous with objections. But all of them had been persuaded to realise the utility of the scheme and they had agreed to part with the required land willingly. Not land alone, they had even come forward with shramdan to see the project through. But the richest landlord of the place had a different view. Well, land was his and why would he part with it for the benefit of others. Two furlongs of land belonging to him could not be obtained and so the road remained unfinished. Days passed. The President of the Panchayat tried in vain to have the land from the rich landlord.

One morning the arrogant landlord tripped in the bathroom. His leg and head were bruised. The President of the Panchayat on hearing the news rushed to the landlord's house with other members of the Panchayat.

The ambulance was called but it had to be parked two furlongs away from the house of the landlord. There was no other alternative but to carry the landlord in a stretcher to the waiting ambulance. But none was willing to carry the load of 250 lbs. for two furlongs. The slender bodied president came forward. His example was soon followed. With hard labour through jungle and overgrowth they carried the stretcher to the ambulance.

After some days, the bruises healed. The landlord returned home completely cured. He ordered straight for the Panchayat President to be brought. When he came the landlord contributed Rs. 101 for the scheme and also the land for completion of the road.

We moved on. Near the road, small channels were flowing, small ripples created an enchanting music. "Where is the origin of these channels which embrace the roads, houses and the plantain fields?" I asked.

"These are the channels from the Chalakudy Dam?", the president informed me. "The water is rushing to quench the thirst of the dry field all around."

Once again I stared at the smiling green all around with wonder.

Melur Panchayat comprising of eight villages, Muringur, Kaladi, Melur, Pulani, Kunnapalli, Adichilli, Mathiramittni and Palapalli, came to limelight in 1962 when it was adjudged as the best Panchayat in the country.

We reached the paddy fields which were golden ripe. I felt they were beckoning me. They seemed to say, "Come, we are prepared to give you a feast for Onam here." Then there were series of banana trees which were fully laden with bananas.

"Is Melur Panchayat the home of plantains?", I asked. "Not only Melur but the entire district is a famous home of plantains", came the proud reply from the Village Level Worker. "In this fertile land, they grow in abundance."

The jeep was running on the road with creepers and small plants on either side. At a little distance, a small calf hearing the sound of the jeep jumped out. In an instant, it fell into the big trench nearby. Immediately, the President stopped the car and ran to the trench. He lifted the calf.

"What we want most are two things—enough of water for the farmers and good road," said a peasant whom we met. "Fortunately, we are having them both. We get enough water from the Chalakudy Dam and because of the hard work of Melur Panchayat we are having enough roads."

Our jeep stopped in front of a big building in a spacious compound. "Let us get down here. This is our primary health centre," the president said. Three rooms and a verandah. The villagers contributed land, money and labour for its construction.

I also saw public wells dug here and there through public cooperation and donations. On the bank of the broad Chalakudy river a bathing ghat has been recently constructed. There are enough facilities for taking a convenient bath. About four bathing ghats have been built in the Melur Panchayat.

To sum up the achievements of the Melur Panchayat it would be sufficient to point out that the Panchayat had constructed 20½ miles ordinary road, 4½ miles metalled roads, one Primary health centre, many culverts and bunds, 4 bathing ghats, one cattle pound, four ponds, etc. The total expenditure in this regard, besides shramdan etc. Was of the order of Rs. 11.16 lakhs, of which Rs. 39,825 and land worth Rs. 7,500 were contributed by the people. This indicates what can be done by the people in developing their own village.

"I believe that I have done my level best to help the small farmers to reach their present standard of living," the president said. And I believed him. Those full grown paddy fields bore testimonials to that.

Ten years ago, people were ignored of improved methods of farming. But now they know the value of better seeds, they cultivate paddy on the basis of improved techniques and feed the land with proper fertilisers. About 1,290 acres of paddy fields and 3,637 acres of raised lands are there. Because of the Chalakudy Irrigation Project there is no scarcity of water. Improved seeds are used for cultivation. Green manure Plants are grown all round. Chemical fertilizers are also available. There are 1,086 compost pits in the area of the Panchayat. About 2,000 tons of chemical fertilizers have been distributed; besides pesticides and other requirements are also being provided. Japanese method of paddy cultivation is being done in about 900 acres of land.

Banana plantation is another source of income among the small farmers. In about 225 acres of land this is being cultivated. There is a mixture now being used as fertilizers for this plantation. There is enough scope for development in this field. The

beautiful coconut trees with round coconuts from their head is a sight to see. Arecanut trees are also seen off and on. About 2,000 improved seedlings of coconut and about 20,000 of arecanut have been distributed among the farmers.

Besides tapioca, rubber, pepper, lemon grass, beans etc. are also being cultivated. Animal husbandry is a part and parcel of farming. Farmers are interested in developing the cattle wealth; because of the help rendered by the government in this field, some improvement could be effected in the cattle wealth. Poultry development is also being made.

The Panchayat which was a little backward in education has now six lower primary schools and three upper primary schools but the absence of a high school is being felt. There are six sports clubs and two Mahila clubs in the area.

The office of the Panchayat is situated in a compound near the road in a beautiful small building. One meeting hall and a verandah adorns a large number of rooms in the building. About Rs. 15,000 can be assessed as the value for that building.

"If we have been able to achieve anything it is not due to my own efforts. It is all due to the cooperation and effort of all our people?" the president said with emotion. Later, a member of the Panchayat told me, "So far, I had not to oppose anything for coming to a decision on a right thing; we have no caste, creed, politics or any other difference. Besides, we are sure that our president will never do a wrong thing. We strive united for the betterment of our future generation."

I found it difficult to take leave of the president and members of the Panchayat. Melur and its people have a hypnotic spell on any visitor. I wished our country had Melur at its every nook and corner.



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