

Community Development

by

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The three tenets of faith have therefore to reassert themselves and be backed by a will stronger than the thunderbolt. Community projects can then be the harbinger of a new age. Papers and cross arguments that now consume the cream of the nation's vitality will then find a new outlet. People need no longer then look up to the Government with the alms bowl in hand. They can constitute the gardeners for themselves, each one sovereign in his own rights, yet all pulling together for the common 'Manzil'¹. The Government can constitute then a mere emblem for the people's will, all other functions being merely incidental. ¹

"It is the quality of the human beings that makes a nation great", said the Master, a long long while ago. A community project will be another 'Fatehpur Sikri'² if this edict is not borne eternally in mind.

1. The home; destination.

2. City near Agra built by Emperor Akbar to serve as the capital of the Mughal Empire, later on abandoned due to shortage of water.

C.P.A.—The Compost Pit Administration

“Where is the community, whose project you are supposed to administer?” asks a friend. “The community is yet far off” I answer. I add “Our eyes are riveted on it, for reach there we must, and we shall”. “Compost Pit Administration is what you should call yourself meantime” interjects my friend. With gratitude, I accept the advice as a compliment.

What is a compost pit? My agricultural friend describes it as a pit on the earth's surface, 15 feet long, 5 feet wide and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, in which we dump farmyard and household refuse with alternate layers of waste leaves and earth and all the filth we can lay our hands on—filth which, if left at large, is a scourge that threatens our life with pestilential epidemics. The questionable assortment when left embedded, with the breath of the earth acting from all directions is cooked into a veritable ‘khichri’¹ in due course to provide nourishing feast to the soil in an effort to compensate for the wear and tear that the one-way traffic of agriculture imposes on her. The process that goes into the making of compost was an instinctive knowledge with our forefathers. It was also common knowledge that life, if it were to endure, must be

1. A gruel meal prepared by a combination of rice, pulse and other odd elements.

a reciprocal traffic, and that behind the din of this bizarre universe there was an amazing order which precluded room for bargaining on "something for nothing".

On the hey-day of our life in the remote past we had conditioned our life's affairs so as to ensure that there would be reciprocity in our affairs between man and man, man and animal, man and vegetation, and in the sum total between man and the universe around. The even tenor snapped when the "Prodigal son" lived beyond his means and thought he could snatch away the family share and carry on by himself. We have gone through many a holocaust since, but do not appear to have learnt yet the lesson. The "Prodigal son" splits the hydrogen atom, shows us the iridescent vapours and the floodlight that the concussion releases for a split second. He tempts others to join the goose-stepping fray one side or the other and provide merriment to the Devil on the wayside.

We have made our own choice. There is no going back. We have resolved to transform the one-way traffic to one of reciprocity. We have resolved to be free from fear, to shed off hatred of the filth within, the filth without and marshal the forces of potential epidemics into the contents of the compost pit. What does it mean in our programme? It means that compost pit can be made the badge of our tribe in this new movement. On the physical plane this means at least one compost pit for every household and its regular use in the style of a sacrament. On the official plane it means the

harnessing of the diverse elements—good, bad, indifferent and vicious, in a single cauldron so that herein also the breath of the ground could knead the conglomerate mass into a single full dish providing victuals for the new campaign. On the political plane we have today the protagonists of the ‘Shor Machao’, the ‘Kar ke Dikhao’² and the multiplicity of ramifications in between, each one pulling in individual direction and all combined constituting what promises to be the most self-defeating expedition that man had ever undertaken in the history of his total existence. The compost pit movement has its exact, perhaps the richest application in politics in the troubled firmament of today.

In some lone corner in Madhya Pradesh one solitary crank had started an innovation. It has already begun the murmur. They refuse to act the “hewers of wood and drawers of water” and be remembered only when it is time for their verdict on the circus. They demand reciprocity, and offer to the “Prodigal son” a safe visa back home from which he strayed generations ago after the lure of the over-sugared ‘Barfi’³, the neon light and the merry-go-round in the carnival. The movement has to spread, and it must, on a wide enough front so that instead of isolated attempts at quality trickling round, quantity by its sheer weight may make itself felt and bring about the qualitative change which is the fundamental behind the movement. India

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1. Element that is more loquacious than practical.
 2. Element that believes in action.
 3. A rich Indian sweet.

did constitute the compost pit of civilisation once. It provided room for the flowering of all from Vatsayana¹ to Acharya Shankar. Each one had his song. All combined produced the orchestra that made up the culture of man as it was hailed once from all corners of the globe. The sons of Parvati² are still here, albeit enfeebled in sight behind the spider's web. But the smoke-screen can be pierced through. It is here alone that we may learn lessons from abroad, learn in a negative as well as positive form. The chaos in the carnival abroad should teach us that we have to look for our Mecca within. The bumper crop in the fields abroad on the other hand should help us to revive the knowledge of methods and practices which yielded like harvests to our forefathers at the dawn of time and from which we strayed under the opium of witchcraft.

Compost Pit Administration demands, therefore, compost pits on the ground on a wide scale ; in the official field, an integration of staff engaged at all levels, and on the political field the widest possible multiplication of the Panchayats, the people, the people's representatives, and the people's servants travelling together to a common destiny. There will then be integration of all from the saint to the devil, from the nightingale to the earthworm. Man and beast, bird and worm, dust and vegetation will then form compost for the Lord on the "Open Road".

1. An ancient Indian seer, an authority on erotic science.
2. The consort of Lord Shiva.

“Destination Man”—Implications

“SEND ME a project by the next mail” came a desperate demand from someone who had heard about the community projects sponsored by the Central Government under the Indo-U.S. Technical Cooperation Agreement. The project could not be despatched in a cover, for it was in nobody’s keeping. The projects are there, everywhere, where people are. What could be mailed was a communication endorsing the resolve of the people that they could work to build a community of themselves, and count on the support of the Central and State Governments and all the other agencies that these supporting bodies could harness to the promotion of the undertaking. Money, the usual prime mover is not the important factor. In fact, the working of the projects has proved conclusively, if proof were needed, that the community once aroused can contribute more than the Government can ever match.

Community projects came to establish the “Right to live”. We lost our right to command the elements in our rendezvous with black magic. We had, therefore, to earn the title-deed afresh. But it could only be, through the “Right to work”, work in such a way as would confer the “Right to receive what is earned”.

Thus the triple rights came into being. They are the Magna Carta for the new project. The trinity of rights—

“Right to live”

“Right to work for a living”

“Right to receive what is earned”

symbolises all that has ever been offered by any written Constitution of man. It means giving effect to the Directive Principles—yet a paper script.

Whether we travel South or North, West or East, monuments of time, some intact, some in debris, tell us of ages bygone. The temples and works of art, the roads and dams bear ample testimony that muscles did do it once.

They tell us “Muscles can do it” again.

They tell further that “Muscles can be trained to do it”, that “Conditions can be created to do it” afresh.

The triple tenets of faith, therefore, constitute the pivotal prerequisites if we are to move forward, even to attempt the new pilgrimage.

The triple charter of rights and the triple tenets of faith by themselves are again not enough ; even madness must have methods if it is to serve a purpose. Workers in the projects have been doing intensive research for the next step. They have tried to sift wisdom from all quarters, from man, animal, vegetation. The answer discovered looks incredibly simple. Significantly enough it is again in a trinity. The answer is—

“Elevation”

“Integration”

“Standardisation”.

“Elevation” means that the rich man must elevate his neighbours near about his own stature, else he will need concrete walls, and ‘Barkandaz’¹ guarding around and at all strategic outposts. But islands and ‘Barkandaz’ around are a myth in the atomic age. Wisdom, therefore, dictates the moral method—the method practised even in the world of vegetation. In such a world, the big trees protect the small ones beyond their shadows against storms and tempests, and nourish them with their own leaves scattered into compost. The reverse process does not avail. Even vegetation has wisdom enough to realise this basic truth. In our specific field of work “Elevation” means, therefore, that the wise and strong will, with their own surplus vitals, try to enrich the weak so that the chain, instead of being as strong as the weakest link, will tend to be as strong as the strongest one.

But “Elevation” alone does not serve the purpose, for giants without a common club will tempt the devil’s delight. So comes the concept of integration—integration for clubbing together, be it for work or for sports, each one playing the role mutually assigned and all combined pulling together towards the common ‘Manzil’. The world is a caravanserai, at best a night-halt. Even Alexander lived and died as one of the multi-millions, in his dusty remains. This was typified in the epic question, said to have been posed by the sentry of the graveyard, to Alexander’s aged mother—“Of the many

1. Infantrymen attached to the feudal landlord.

Alexanders the Great I guard within the walls, which one do you look for, mother? I assure thee, they were all great in their lifetime!" The world has moved through many a millennium. But the wisdom of the caretaker still remains unheeded.

In rugged prose "Integration" means for our purpose a tabooing of isolation so that from Gram Sewaks to the top administrator it will be one chain, a common single movement. But movement can also be that of a mob. The mob is a model of integration. And so, arises the need for "Standardisation", a process that will clearly define the direction of the movement, the role that each link in the common chain will play in the common game. It is the working out of the details to precision, the assignment of the target and the continuous checking and re-checking—not of objectives any longer, but of the route march and our progress towards the destination that will mean the difference between victory and defeat in the campaign, between the mob and the army of liberation.

The implications of the community projects, therefore, are clear. They are basic, therefore simple. They are a clear recognition of the triple charter of rights, the triple tenets of faith and the triple rules of business. The concept of the trinity has to travel all along the line, it has to permeate every fibre of life. If there is this basic understanding, the people, the people's representatives and the people's servants will shed their reservations of each other. We may then carve a new road out of the maze of

confusion in which we today are lost. The road, we know, must be long. But it will be sure. We have discovered already, towards death there are many a short-cut but towards life there can, alas, be no royal road. Our anxiety is to avoid the zigzag. This is the quest. This is also the consummation. The Republic of man is yet to be. Towards that destination, our travail may serve as a tributary, it may also be the Mother Ganga to which others will join as tributaries. The answer lies in the smiling sweat and tears we shed to serve as mortar for the gravel. Meantime two things are certain. Short-cuts are the pranks of the devil. Road is not built with paper or polemics.

A Nation Lives on Faith

The wealth of India is still produced in the villages. The village, in ancient times, received on this account primary attention from her kings and rulers. The colonial rule imposed on India a civilisation wholly foreign to the soil. The towns sprang up logically as carbuncles on the body. The one-way traffic that immediately began was a process that pumped the vitals out of India's villages. The bulk of the substance went to fatten the blood bank in London. Small shares remained for the newly created intermediaries pastiming in brothels, night-clubs and the race-courses in the newly sprung up towns. The colonial rulers are gone. The old mentality persists.

If the Britishers are gone, and the foundation pillars are undergoing transformation for the new structure, why is it that we are not moving ahead towards the 'Manzil' we started for? The answer to this riddle can be discovered in the triangular maze in which we have gotten ourselves entrapped. One arm of this triangle looks back at the remote past and sheds tears for the 'Ram Raj'¹ now no more. This arm looks for the bullock-cart, the wooden sandals and the tree-skins for a clothing. It looks towards the

1. Proverbial period of prosperity and equity in Indian history during the reign of King Rama.

Himalayas for perfection and ignores life on the level land below, as a veritable den of the devil and a mere illusion. The second arm looks longingly to the hemisphere below and wishes to burn the cart, the sandals and the tree-skins all, and build sky-scrappers instead so that the feet can pace in unbridled sovereignty, ever away from the dust on the soil and the mind can soar in the clouds above. The third arm looks frantically for the new religion hailing from the north and now from the east, and demands liquidation of the individual and his replacement by the all powerful colossus—the State. At the centre of the triangle stands ‘Sethjee’ with his fist tight on the purse string. He proclaims that the times are bad, we have no money and so we should mark time and let ourselves drift and leave him alone with his designs.

India was once a ‘Home’ for all, from the devil to the saint with the whole range in between. Hinduism was not a religion, but a philosophy that was a composite of all culture and something more, its own. The human body is a composite whole. If it has a meaning, it is because it is a synthesis between the head and the intestinal gutters with all the functions in between. If India is to be revived, she has to follow her own tradition. Times have changed. Revival of the past alone will not therefore avail. The bullock-cart and the jet plane, the log fire and the atom blast have therefore to be blended for travel on parallel routes.

The woods are the abode of all, from the ant to the lion. These denizens left to themselves

can thrive together, be a complement to each other in the pilgrimage on the common route. Trouble begins when nature's equilibrium is disturbed. India must survive ; India must be ready to discover the road to life if the storm gathering on the horizon is to be rationalised. Sanatoria for tubercular patients and drug stores for lethal diseases may serve statistics ; they do not help the nation. The provision of food, shelter and clothing, and work to secure these, do. Machine is good when it eases toil or only serves to provide the onion and garlic—spices to the dish of life. It acts the devil incarnate when it uproots life from its cultural anchorage on the soil. Agriculture must needs, therefore, constitute the primary industry. Machines, and the industries based on them must be planned for subservience to the soil—the basic anchorage.

Alladin's lamp works in dreams or in fairy tales. In life it has no place except for the children or for the mentally deranged. Rose cannot be had without the thorn. Nature's laws are inexorable. "Something for nothing" is a myth. If life is to be recast, it must be through nuclei, not as appendages to the old or as carbuncles on the soil, but those that will be integrated to the soil, that will constitute the foci from which will flow life, now in the opposite direction towards the village. After the deficits have been made up, the even two-way flow can begin all over again. Others are neither willing nor able to furnish us the wherewithals to make up for this deficit pump-back. We have therefore

to look, within. The consummation will mean tighter belts for many, good-bye to the brothels, the night-club, and the race-course. It will mean sweat for all including even those that believed in the cream and the fruit salad as an inherent right for the ivory towers.

Project—The Perspective

The multi-storeyed buildings soar higher and higher. The architect behind cries that he has yet to touch the sky. The jet planes fly high and fast. The aim is to reach the stratosphere and then beyond. Meantime, the atom is split to open the flood-tide of a new "Open sesame" to nature's secrets. Elements in their natural state no longer suffice. The power that generates from coal, oil, water and wind is not enough. Man looks for the "Destination Moon" or the "Destination Mars". Like Alexander of fading memory he pines in bed and cries that the world is too small for him. Man has today the keys to most of nature's secrets, enough to have all he needs, nay, even a surplus in which he can drown himself. The two wars fought within a quarter of a century consumed men and material which could exterminate poverty, ignorance and disease from the face of the earth for ever. Yet he goose-steps on each of the hemispheres and prepares for a third war, which, he says, is going to be the last. Indeed, it very well may, for the weapons he knows today and those he is bound to discover under the desperate stress of the next war, may be enough to make life untenable on earth for a century or more.

Caught between the goose-steps, India finds herself in an unenviable position. Her population

—three hundred and sixty five millions—demand food, clothing and shelter with a desperate urgency. The world in turmoil can offer no answer to India. She has thus to discover for herself the road to her new destiny. The road should be such as will be anchored to her own moorings, yet able to survive the storms and stresses that threaten her today from within and without. Destiny beckons that she must steer clear of the goose-steps, and play the role of the eternal saviour of peace and help the truant spirit in its journey back home. Leaders at the helm of the Government of India today are chosen from the people, based perhaps on the widest democratic franchise the world has yet seen in its long chequered history. Servants of the Government also represent the cream of intellect that the nation could produce. There are then the people who are aching to see India move onward in the comity of nations—people from the same race who built the Ajanta and Ellora, the great temples in the East, West, North and the South, the Pearl Mosque and the Taj Mahal—the race which produced the Gita and the Upanishads, the Ramayana and Mahabharata—epics which are timeless in their texture and content. The bondage is gone. The road is open. The leaders, the servants of Government, the people—the three arms of the nation—have to have a clear vision of the new destination. They have to travel together.

With the advent of freedom from the chains, there has been activity in all directions. Mammoth factories are coming into production ;

giant laboratories, colleges of science and engineering are coming into operation. Multi-purpose projects to bring controlled water for irrigation and electricity to rural areas are dashing ahead with a frantic speed. Aerodromes have been opened throughout the land and air service plying day and night with a standard of safety rivalling the best in the world. Coastal shipping and ship building are also gaining pace. Indeed, there is hardly a field in which activity is missing. Yet behind the strokes of shovels and the clinks of iron something vital is missing. Freedom of act is there but freedom is yet to come. Freedom does not descend. The spirit has to ascend the steps of the temple. The Constitution of India visualises the creation of a commonwealth of free people based on democracy. But democracy if it has to have a meaning, must be based on the enlightened will of the major number.

Eighty-two per cent of India's population still lives in her teeming ghost-ridden villages. The vitals of these villages have been drained for centuries in a one-way traffic towards the imported paradise of India's towns. If India is to survive the one-way traffic has to be reversed. The movement must be rationalised into a square deal where the towns and the villages will live and thrive as complements to each other, where the parasitic economy will be replaced by the economy of reciprocity. If the increased amenities sponsored by the Government are to subserve the people, the large masses of the Indian population must be made strong and

conscious enough to withstand the onslaught of human locusts. They must be trained to be the architects, masters and the beneficiaries of all these multipurpose endowments, if the manure, irrigation water and the other facilities are not to mean but a pastime for parasites.

The community project in India is an effort of a peace-loving people to lift themselves as a community from darkness unto light, from disease unto health and from poverty unto wealth. It is a concentrated effort in the first place for the revitalisation of the rural areas long in the process of putrefaction. The pattern of development is based on the pooled experiences of projects conducted on the lines of those in the Baroda State, in Madras, at Etawah and other rural centres in Uttar Pradesh, at the rehabilitation townships of Nilokheri and Faridabad in the Punjab and integrated with allied experiences as could be gathered from abroad. The aim is to transform the "Law and Order-cum-Mai Bap"¹ Government of pre-1947 regime into the 'Bhai Bandhi'² Agency of a Welfare State. The Welfare State implies a coalition of the Government with the people in such a way as to enable the two components to travel hand in hand each complementing the other's effort for the promotion of the common objective.

The community project is being implemented under the direct control of the Prime Minister, with a single line organisation down to the

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1. Parental autocracy.
 2. Fraternal.

ground in the rural areas. The organisation has been so designed as to get itself dovetailed into the existing machinery of the Government both at the Centre and in the States. The purpose is to avoid setting parallel agencies under the same Government. The hope is that if the single line organisation for the community project can move ahead it shall move the entire machinery of the Government with it and should therefore serve to help it being greased, oiled and overhauled in the process for the new dispensation after August 15, 1947.

While the fulfilment of the material needs of the teeming millions in India is an objective of the scheme, the main purpose of the scheme is to rouse the people to a consciousness of their fundamental obligations as Man, and of their rights which result directly therefrom. India did rule once as the sovereign monarch over herself. The sovereignty has been in exile for a long age. The usurpers are no more. Ghosts of centuries are the only phantoms that remain to be exorcised. The "Born Sovereign" is at last on the way back home. Community project in India is aimed to be the harbinger of the home coming—"Destination Man".

Sweat or 'Mantrams'¹?

The Mahant of the temple with his long pigtail looked more like a wrestler than a servant of God. But his disciples had devotion for him which put God in eclipse. The Mahant used to take his bath at midnight. This aroused my curiosity. I wanted to know the reason behind. It was not long, before I discovered that the Mahant was a regular patron of the brothel next door. The midnight bath was only a clean up for the conscience before its re-entry into the temple. Black marketeers carry on their trade merrily in the by-lanes of Calcutta as they do in all other big cities. These veteran custodians of the nation's wealth clean up their conscience by distributing sugar in the morning to ants on their way to Mother Ganga.

Thirty years ago we heard Bapu proclaim that Swaraj would come within twelve months, if we boycotted the Government and foreign goods, and took to spinning enmasse. We were content with the promise. We called Bapu a Mahatma and expected him in return to work the miracle. The important proviso that Bapu made, we chose to forget as a matter of convenience. When the miracle came twenty and odd years later, partly through Bapu's lone travail,

1. Sacred words.

partly through the sweat of a certain number of his devoted comrades and partly through other forces which worked both within and without, we wanted Bapu to undo the poison-fruit of partition. In our heart we knew the partition was a result of centuries of our misthinking and misdoings. We refused, however, to probe within. When Bapu failed to work the miracle overnight we chose to murder him. We grieved over the incident, but consoled ourselves with the thought that now that Bapu had gone we would make a real Mahatma of him by installing his image in a new order of temples in which we could serve as mahants afresh. But, twentieth century is a century of idol breakers. The myth of the Alladin's Lamp is being torn to shreds by the fast moving findings of modern science. The cult of beads and 'Mantrams' no longer avails. Temples and sanctuaries are drying up for want of fresh recruits. The surplus is just not there to provide the where-withal for the black magic. We have to rid ourselves of this hoax if we are to face the reality.

Community project is here. It has taken the heart of millions. The project has received wide publicity. The country in general has given its blessings to the scheme. The amendments so far received are of a minor nature and are in the process of incorporation. It can be claimed safely that, by and large, the project has aroused a new faith. It has created a new upsurge. This is all to the good. The pitfall, however, remains. We may fall prey again to the customary cult of beads and 'Mantrams'. We

may expect miracle out of the project and then feel crest-fallen, when the miracle looks still far off upon the expiry of the short years. It behoves us, therefore, to analyse the pros and cons and orient ourselves as to what we may safely expect and what we may not.

In a society based on law, suicide is a crime. The Draft Outline on the Community Project issued by the Community Project Administration describes the community project as a pilot in the establishment, for the men, women and children covered by the project area, of the "Right to live". However, a moment's reflection will reveal that the "Right to live" is still a pious wish on paper. Three millions of men, women and children were said to have died on the streets of Calcutta for want of nourishment. Feasts and festivities went on. Theatres and cinemas, clubs and races, sweet shops and fruit shops were carrying on their normal pastime, as if nothing was happening. Indeed nothing did happen. Not a glass pane was broken. People just poured in, driven by hunger. They fell dead on the foot-paths and by-lanes. A few shed tears. Many fumed and fretted that they would have taken the cudgel, if only a new order of "ism" could prevail. Others in the name of the people bootlicked the foreign rulers and found in this small event added excuse to bolster the effort for what they called "the people's war".

It is transparent, if the "Right to live" is to reassert itself as a sovereign right, the hurdles on the way must be fought to a finish. They

are ignorance, poverty and disease. Bapu understood these root causes of our ills. He also knew, nothing could be done until the alien rulers were driven out. The alien rulers are out. But the road is yet full of hurdles. The alien rulers managed to rule because they discovered soft spots in which they could entrench themselves. Therefore, the soft spots must receive immediate treatment.

The new order has taken birth and is blossoming forth at a fast pace. According to the measures visualised in the community project programme, we can certainly expect increased food, better roads, better health and sanitation measures, new avenues for employment in arts, crafts and cottage industries ; better scope for children's education, education on basic lines, social education, promotion of better housing, community outlook through development of panchayats and co-operatives. These will certainly be achieved for the determination is there in the form of an iron will and a steel mandate behind. Measures to bring about these consummations are being planned in precise details. But the question immediately emerges—"what happens when these physical targets begin to be achieved under the concerted pressure from the top"?

India has had a good distribution of rainfall. Crops have been well sowed. The countryside is fairly green throughout, greener than it is said we have had for many years. Lo, the locusts are already about. They are growing into a nightmare for the peasants. How can we,

in the community project areas, guarantee freedom to the common man from the menace of the locusts ? Not the locusts that fly above, but the locusts in our own selves who wish to walk about on the ground with the sacred thread exhibited on the exterior and the 'Mantrams' recited on the beads ; those who move about in the law courts defending and winning victories for false cases ; those of us in uniform or with the Government emblem on the forehead who still feel tempted to parade about extracting ransoms from the myriads of life's activities of the common man ; those of us who as physicians choose to administer drugs for the disease only to promote more complicated ones, instead of treating the whole man ; we who as people's representatives wish to fatten only ourselves at the expense of the people ; the king locusts amongst us who in our naivete are invading our very culture in the name of recreation and are perverting the soul of the nation to the very root. What can the community project do to neutralise these cults of parasitism, to checkmate Mr. Hyde who is taking possession of our soul imperceptibly, steadily ? Here comes the crux of the objective as also the problem for the project.

The project staff will be stranger both to the people as also to the people's representatives. The people's representatives will be shy both of the Government agency as also of the people who chose them and who are to choose them again. The people will prefer to be left alone from both. Community project, if it is to be a people's

programme, will have to be a common movement of all the elements in the project area. Therefore, the gulf has to be bridged. Can the project staff rise to the requisite effort ? Will the people's representatives shed their shyness and join hands, head and heart ? Will the people cast away their fear ? The project staff has, perforce, to take the initiative. It will be an uphill task, perhaps the most thankless that a Government agency has ever had to face. Will they ? They must, if the project is at all to begin.

The jagirdars, talukdars, zamindars and money-lenders, not to mention the small dignitaries of the government who have had till now an undisputed monarchy over rural regions, will find their vested positions seriously threatened with the impact of the new-comers. They have to be given new positions of honour based on service in the new context. Will the project staff be wise and self-effacing enough to smile while the job done by them is to reflect credit on others ? Illiteracy and ignorance stalk the land. It will be an endless sea of people. Their apathy and resistance will be revolting. A little knowledge when it begins to permeate, will give rise to all manners of perversity in the people. Reactionary forces, which will always remain in a rabid or mild form, will join hands with them. Efforts will have to be diverted to neutralise the menace. Will the project staff have the mother's patience in them ?

The creative genius of our simple folks in the villages which found its outlet in the master

sculpture and paintings, dance and music, drama and poetry, 'bhajans' and 'kirtans'¹ is dying out in shame before the imported jazz and the triangular love conflicts in the movies. Will the project staff be creative and rebellious enough to restore the dignity of the native art and give it the orientation that the mid-twentieth century demands? Work with the hand is still the job of the menial. The gospel of the "dirty hands" has to be made the supreme criterion for citizenship in "New India". Here, as always, example alone can serve the precept. Will the project staff, from down below to the top, be able to baptize themselves to the new creed—not as a stunt but as an integral feature of their life? Sweat is sweet on paper; it is grinding in the hot sun. Can they persist in the efforts? Will they?

In India of old, the rich man used to earn his status in society by setting an example of what he can do for the community as a whole? Will the project staff be able to help replace the game of "Ninetynine" with the game of the "One"? Here again precepts will be of little avail. The move has to start with the preceptor himself, and the gift has to be one of "live for those with whom one feels one". Is it too Christian? No, it is only "Destination Man". The twentieth century world has dwindled to a very small size. Oceans and mountains stand in the way no longer. There is no room for an island on land. Therefore, man has to be

1. Hymns and Songs.



treated as an indivisible concept. How far can man survive in the limited number of projects against the impact of the fear and lust-stricken world without, granted that the project staff and their non-official associates muster up strength enough to serve as the air-conditioner for the duration of the project ?

The "Right to live" as has been implied is not easy to reach. The entitlement to the trinity of rights presupposes a sovereign consciousness. The consciousness has to be aroused on a universal scale. There never was a short-cut road to sovereignty. On this pilgrimage the long road turns to be the short road in the end. We have, therefore, to be fully alive to the magnitude of the task and the hurdles enroute. The community project does not promise the millennium for scores of years yet to come. It promises, however, to lay the foundation for the road to the 'Manzil'. The avalanche is on. No power can stem it from down below or high up. It will not wait for our bidding. We can wait only to our peril, to be swept aboard ; alternatively we can clear and pave the terrain and be on the crest of the wave to direct the tide within the bounds of banks. The future is a choice of life or death. Benign Providence has chosen us as the torch-bearers on the road to new life. Sweat is our wherewithal. 'Mantram', with a motive, will be the devil's prank which we must steer scrupulously clear of.

To My Kinsmen in the Village

This country of ours spreads, as you know, over 2,000 miles from east to west and 2,000 miles from north to south. Not very long ago our forefathers all lived in the countryside as you do now. We had rich and poor people even in the old days but they lived together within the confines of their villages and took care of each other according to their capacity. The village as a whole constituted a big family. The inhabitants of the villages followed professions from agriculture to medicine including all the handicrafts and services in between, complementary to each other but self-sufficient in all elementary needs of life. When people fought, as indeed they must from time to time if they have any vitality at all, the disputes were settled by the village elders and they were almost always forgotten overnight with no malice behind.

When colonial rule came, it had to find in our teeming population the market for the rapidly expanding factories which came in the wake of modern science and technology in England and other neighbouring countries in Europe. The handicraft and cottage product of India and the dumped products of the machine from abroad could not co-exist. The hand and heart retreated before the advancing machine. Our village industries were destroyed in the process.

New towns and cities sprang up to provide facilities for marketing of imported merchandise and with these came roads and railways, police and law-courts and other institutions of government for holding the newly subjected people down.

Domination over a people by a foreign power cannot be secured except through local participation. So while the lion's share of India's tribute passed beyond the seas, crumbs were thrown up here and there to feed accomplices in this one-way traffic against the primary producers. We became accordingly the exporters, on the ruler's terms, of raw materials which we grew with our sweat, and the consumers of tinned merchandise imported in exchange. Our shopkeepers and other commission agents in their anxiety to perpetuate a share in the bargain chose to take their residence by the side of the ruling camps. Thus sprang the carbuncles in the form of our new cities and towns as clearing-houses for this unhappy commerce. The cream of our manpower from the countryside migrated to these new centres under the lure of the drinking clubs, the gambling dens and other pastimes for which there could be licence minus the moral pressure from neighbours.

When India became free from foreign rule on August 15, 1947, the big cities and towns were vacated by the colonial ruler's representatives to be filled in rapidly by our own nationals. India does not however exist wholly in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other cities. In fact 82 per cent of our people still live in the

villages. We believe in democracy which means the wishes of 51 or more out of a hundred have to prevail. The big programme of expansion in buildings and other amenities in big cities would not go far to build the nation. New India had to be built where her primary citizens dwell namely in our villages.

During the 200 years of alien rule our friends in the cities and towns forgot the existence of villages in India except for the food and other raw material which flowed from these and for which they managed to pay the least. On this background we can imagine the ordeal our leaders at the helm of Government had to undergo to convince others who still hugged on to the past that villages do have an equal if not a prior claim on the resources of Government. "Let the villagers produce more food first to replace the import from abroad plus a surplus. We would then think of providing amenities to the village people such as schools for children, medical aid for the ailing, facilities for sanitation and hygiene, village communications, aid for industries and other matters", they said. They forgot that agriculture could not be pulled up as a subject for special treatment in isolation from others. For example, good agriculture is not possible without irrigation, without animals, without proper implements, without cooperation in marketing, supplies, as well as credit. Nor is it feasible without communications to facilitate transport, without good health if crops are to be grown and harvested timely, without education if improved knowledge of agriculture was

to be progressive. We also needed village industries if the unemployed and under-employed were to have the means of livelihood, and the surplus income from agriculture was to find a ready outlet in consumer goods as against increase in suicidal litigation. After a good deal of tussle on the basic issues, the Government did succeed in launching the programme now known as Community Development.

The programme brings welfare services of Government nearer to the village level. Representatives of Government who were a terror to villagers during alien rule were charged overnight to turn their attention from exaction and expropriation to service and 'Shramdan'¹. Technical services in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, education, rural engineering, public health, village industries, are now available at the headquarters of a Block of 60,000 to 70,000 people and these are transmitted through the Gram Sewak² who is placed in charge of a circle of 5,000 to 6,000 people. Thus the Collector of the District begins to transform himself from his role of Collector to one of administrator for the development of the people and their local resources. The transformation travels down the line embracing all functionaries upto the village level.

But the resources of Government are neither wide nor deep enough, for the Government can receive its revenues only from the people who reside in India. Our average income per family

1. Gift of labour.
2. Village level worker.

is near about the lowest in the world. How do we then go about this business of developing the countryside, and the potentialities of our people whose minds and muscles although highly potent stand idle for a major portion of the year? How do we make our citizens the shareholders in the joint stock enterprise of India as against the tenants-at-will existence they have had heretofore? We discovered that the answer to this dilemma lay in the limited resources of Government being pooled with the substantially unlimited time and resources that hung heavy on our people.

We can no longer afford to pay for the spurious rates of interest obtaining in the countryside nor can we pursue the suicidal practice of litigation which has eaten into the core of the community life that we had in our villages once. So we resolved to build panchayats for civic affairs and cooperatives for economic activities in all our villages. The Parliament in Delhi and the Legislatures in the States will have little roots in the people unless institutions of local self-Government travel down to the village with progressive decentralisation of Governmental responsibilities and authority. Establishment of Panchayats and Cooperatives is designed, therefore, to play the major role in this programme. The Government agency and the village people are expected to meet each other progressively through these institutions.

Now that we are free from the tentacles of foreign rule and we can elect as leaders only those who belong to us, we have to provide

facilities for our representatives to be of service to us in turn not merely in the Parliament and State Legislature but also in the field of development where we plan and implement for the future which is shaping itself in the 550,000 of our slumbering villages in the countryside. The Block Advisory Committee which functions in a Community Block and which includes as members representatives of Panchayats, Co-operatives, State Legislature and Parliament besides the Block headquarters personnel and representatives of other non-official agencies, is intended to bring about corporate action on broad based democracy.

The roads and lights, schools and hospitals, community buildings and playgrounds, industries with modern equipment and appliances which we feel jealous of in big cities and towns should no longer be out of our reach. These are capable of being reproduced in the remotest of our villages provided we all wake up from our opium slumber, take the spade in hand and are prepared to dig and plant the orchard which our children can pluck from tomorrow. If we cannot do this, how do we guarantee that the few who sold the title-deeds of the many in the past, will not do so again when an emergency threatens and engulfs us, as it must periodically, in the jungle world we still are in? Community Development Programme aims to rebuild the stature of the last man in the countryside by offering him opportunities for self-reliance and self-expression, and for combination with his kind in the common effort to the common

destiny—the New India, on the foundation of the socialist cooperative commonwealth we are pledged to usher in.

II

Journey Begins

The Journey Begins

It was a clear day, clearer than any we have had for many weeks. The ascending sun was shining with all the fury on the face of visitors in their thousands who hailed from the city of Delhi and from the countryside around the village of Alipore which was the seat of inauguration of the community project for the Delhi Block. President's message over, the Prime Minister was requested to say a few words on the project. He looked visibly annoyed that he had to talk. He came ready to work, to give a hand to the people. He could not, however, resist the demand. He walked up the rostrum and delivered what perhaps was the briefest speech he had ever made. He thundered "Time for speeches is gone, it is time for work and sweat". He got down, rushed through the exhibition and went straight to the spot which was calling him. With sleeves rolled up, the jacket off, and the sun by then burning overhead, the first servant of the State showed the way as to how others down the line should act. Thus the journey began.

The function of all those connected with the Community Project Administration from the top down to the ground has, therefore, been clearly defined. It is one of setting an example. Administrator of the Community Projects has

been happily compelled to take a decision as regards his future functions. He is anxious to do his bit with the spade and the shovel on the Mother Earth, joining the 'Yajna'¹ in which the people, the people's servants may join heads, hands and shoulders on the common road to the future. He is aching to move and counts upon his friends and comrades from the Development Commissioners down to the Village Level Workers to give him the opportunity to participate in the new movement.

The small journey which has just begun should soon develop into a route march. If it does, and it must, 'INQUILAB ZINDABAD'² will then find a worthier substitute. The virgin soil will then be upturned not to replace the new "haves" with an equivalent chosen number from the "have nots" but to lead to the cataclysmic movement which will engulf all, levelling down in the process, the barriers that exist between man and man, which today cloud the vision and paralyse the muscles.

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1. Sacrament.
 2. Long live Revolution.

*Ellora and Ajanta*¹

I came to Ellora. I never knew that there could be anything of this stature and character anywhere in the world. I did not know that there could be human beings so great, so completely mad. Everyone in his lonely heart looks forward to something or somebody greater than himself. I suppose that is how man conceived of a being whom he worships. I was looking forward to something which could be much more than anything that I could ever think of creating myself. I have met it at last. Here, I put my ears to the stone to hear what they say. I hear the whispering thud from men, day after day, year after year, using their tiny chisels carving out these mighty monuments. The first idea that struck me was that I should share this experience with you all. I could not get together all my comrades working in various parts of this country at once. So I thought I would at least pull you here—those that belong to Central India. As neighbours of this place, you have the first right.

I wanted you to be a part of history. It is very necessary. We often get ourselves lost in our little corners. I wanted to share with you what men like us, who were our ancestors, with

1. From a speech to a seminar of co-workers.

infinitely less knowledge of techniques and principles of physical science, have left for us, so that we may learn how to be humble. In that nearly prehistoric period, there were perhaps only chisels and small hammers. I am not sure if even a chisel did exist 2,000 years ago, for man hardly could know in that age the use of iron and steel. So we do not know how they did this great work. Today, man has acquired so much knowledge that he can destroy the whole world. Of course, when we know how to destroy the world, I suppose the knowledge for re-creating the world will also have grown side by side. I believe it is possible therefore that with the same knowledge, we can also rebuild the world near to our hearts' desire. That is what had happened 2,000 years ago. People collected together, with their kings, architects, artists, masons, workers, and the common men and women. They did not think of marching themselves upon others. Instead they concentrated on building something which has endured for 2,000 years and which will perhaps endure till the end of time.

Now you will also see in this place itself, just about two miles from here, the remains of some people who chose to act in a different way. Their graves are there as eloquent testimony to their attempt to conquer others. To their way of thinking and to those who try to act so, the graves stand a living reminder. You do not have any graves here at Ellora of people who sweated and bled for centuries together, to create a dream for posterity. They are gone ; their

work remains. This is the difference. We are today engaged in our own way in trying to do something again. People at Ellora knew best how to create a dream for posterity. But we cannot dream because life is so exacting today that there is no room for dreaming. At that time it was possible for people to dream because there was an abundance of everything.

That there was abundance you can see from the expression on the faces and the figures in thousands inscribed here in everlasting stone. We do not have plenty today. We have yet to create the wherewithals for a bare existence. It is only after we have achieved this, that perhaps the future generations will again be able to continue the old dream and build up venues of fresh dreams for coming generations.

How did they succeed in working these miracles 2,000 years ago? What was behind it all? The only answer I can find from these living stones is that there was faith and the sacred fire that follows that faith; well, there is nothing in the world, indeed in the whole history of mankind, that has survived and sustained through the ravages of time without these two elements behind. You can see, these people had a master plan. Take the case of this Kailash Temple. The entire face of the hill is one solid piece of rock. Not one scrap of dust has been added to the temple from outside. It was obvious that some Master-Planner conceived the entire dream and planned it out in the minutest of details. He got the architects and sculptors who gave shape to the dream and the plan—not architects

and sculptors alone but also the masses of common man. In Ajanta, they have depicted men and women, styles of dress and colours for men and women which we are yet to reach, much less rival. Now all these people in these regions had collected together and fitted into the Master Plan ; the Master-Planner drew the Plan, handed to the individual architects, painters, sculptors and others. Thereafter, the master architects and artists in charge of each phase of the work collected groups of workmen, skilled and unskilled. There was a complete plan, a complete organization, a complete execution. This is the lesson for us today fresh as it was 2,000 years ago.

We have today in the midst of us again a Master-Artist. He is again an Indian. He dreams about the great past, a great future. The Master-Planner wishes this country and the world to move forward in tranquility and peace. He has tried, and is trying in his own way to tell our countrymen, in particular, that we can be as great as we were at one time ; that if we wish to be great, we can be so not through 'Mantram' but through sweat and blood alone. The same sacred fire that created the greatness of the land that once was India, which sent messages and messengers to all parts of the world is still burning in us. We happen to be a small segment of the new group of messengers and architects. The lesson is to go ahead and turn the new dream into a reality. For this we need strength. The strength is here if you look for it.

Now we are building for tomorrow. If there is to be a tomorrow, that tomorrow must

follow today and today must be based on the foundation of yesterday. It is to blend ourselves afresh as a community charged with a sacred job, that I invited you here, so that you could be with the best that was in the past and influence accordingly the tomorrow of our dreams. You have seen "Yesterday". I wish you to think what "Today" should be.

This has been a country of terrifying diversity. In these Ellora caves themselves, as also in the caves of Ajanta, you will see in the paintings and the sculptures the richness and diversity of our people and the under-current of unity that flowed there throughout. We wish every person to be an individual. We do not wish any regimentation for the minds of our people. You can see this very feature at play here. Each man functioned as an individual. Yet when it came to the great cause to which they were wedded, all individuals did make a contribution. So out of individuals sprang a community of interests which was as rich as the synthesis of all the individuals. That is precisely what we are aiming at under the programme of community projects. We do not wish our people in different parts of the country to be all alike. We wish every part to retain its individuality, every individual to retain his or her individuality and all the 365 millions of individuals, men, women and children to march together to the New India now under the chisel. This was the message from "Yesterday". This is also the message of "Today"—the message from the Master-Planner and the Master-Builder of all time.

Unto This Last

AN OPEN LETTER

Your call reached me in my corner. I came to join you. August 15, 1947 Britishers left. We substituted the Tricolour flag for the Union Jack. We had to take over power despite our inexperience. I admire all that has been achieved since the fateful event, in particular the unity that has come over this sub-continent which had not been one like this ever before, the peace that reigns to-day despite the holocaust of 1947-48 on which we had to begin the foundation, the stature that the country has acquired in the eyes of the world which till yesterday had equated us with prehistoric species.

I trust you when you say "Freedom has no meaning on a shrunken stomach, minus the wherewithal for a cover around and above", that you are out to carry the message of freedom "unto the last man", and you will not approach me with an empty hand this time asking for the usual toll which has been my lot for many a generation. I believe you when you proclaim that you wish to combine the message of freedom with the message of modern science for my succour, that you will also provide me the wherewithals such as I cannot muster on my own, for making a beginning.

You know, by birth and by tradition, I am a man of peace. I understand when you tell me that the days of 'Mantrams' are gone, that I should join you in the sacrament of sweat and tears, that India should carve out a road—her own, and may be incidentally, lend a hand to others groping in the darkness without. I am prepared to agree with you when you tell me that the boulevards others claim to have built for themselves in adjoining areas are barter in values over-much blood-stained, that they have not been ends determined by means, but just the opposite and therefore are forbidden to me as a son of this soil.

I believe you implicitly. And so I foreswore my pastime in the sun and my feuds with neighbours based on caste, creed, religion and the thousand and odd other pleas. The roads, schools, hospitals, wells, farms, community centres, the increased crops I have raised and am still engaged in raising at but a nod from you, and my contribution despite my stooping spine and rickety limbs, which you yourself nearly equate with the total State contribution will bear testimony to the vitality I still possess despite the exploitation over centuries to which I have been subject.

You asked me to be rid of my natural fear, and to place my trust in the Gram Sewak and the others directing him. I have not regretted listening to your advice. For, the Gram Sewak has so far acted a real servant of the people. Even the others above, despite the hang-over of "Yesterday", are trying desperately hard to join

the Gram Sewak in promoting my cause. In fact, it is amazing how some who had rarely been outside the golf links and the club bars during the best part of their lives, are struggling to get accustomed to my rustic company in the mid-summer sun as much as in the downpour of the monsoon. I like this and bless you for it.

My representative, who like the "Prodigal son" had left his hamlet years ago for the lure of the cities and towns, has begun to make enquiries of me as a neighbour with increasing frequency. He tells me of the things he is yet to bring to my door. I smile in acquiescence and rejoice in the wishful thought that my gifted neighbour will perhaps be back to his hamlet at long last to provide me the long over-due guidance and inspiration while travelling with me hand in hand, instead of labouring to paint the "green mansions" for me from the distance. I am told that our distant American neighbours also have a hand in this great movement in that they have provided a share by way of imported equipment and have also made some contribution to the field of technical assistance. I like this, for this lifts my problem out of my lone shoulder into the wider horizon and gives me incidentally a foretaste of citizenship in the "One World" still in the making.

From all I have said above you will readily gather how loyal I am as a citizen, and to what length I am ready to travel with you towards your objectives of a composite community based on "Co-existence". I am ready as I have attempted so far, to put in all I have, together

with what I can muster from my kith and kin including all my neighbours whom I can bring under my influence. I will listen and do all I can to push ahead with this community endeavour according to the guidance given me by my local representative if there, and by the servants of the State whom you know I support on my hunchback on the scale prescribed without a whisper. I am prepared to do all this despite my bitter experiences of the past, for I trust you implicitly.

I am an unlettered farmer's son. I come, I grow, I wither, I fade away in silence. I do know this much however, that one cannot deal with Good and Evil in the same breath, that revolution may be ushered in silence even without a drop of blood-letting ; but skirmishes are unavoidable. Even the season refuses to change without some minor upheavals in the upper air which must needs touch the ground even though in attenuated forms. Therefore, I realise that "Playing safe" has also its limits and that the formula of extension with the all-embracing character it has developed in the Indian Community Programme and despite the size of the conveyor and the accessories carried alongside, will be an over-simplification as good as the 'Mantram' of old, unless peripheral decisions follow which will decide many a pressing issue which you know are fundamental.

I have pledged above that I will travel with you if needs be, even to the bitter end. I mean this. Yet, if the roads you and I build together are to serve as boulevards for the blackmarketeers,

the adulterators, and the burlesque exhibitors, if the technical know-how is to be the privilege only of a select few, and the growing mass of the landless and professionless including my children and those of my neighbours have to continue in perpetual insecurity, I fear my offspring after me are not likely to follow in my footsteps. I am sure you will not wish them either. But I agree with you,—no nation has risen to greatness without paying a great price. I also agree with you, we are working at a mighty revolution.

Great events are shaking the subterranean region. The sand foundation is already running, the superstructure cracking from within. Prices have begun to be paid, as yet but by masses of small men. Great men are yet to arrive in number to pay the great price and get us started on the road to the peak as against the pit. I had to caution you at the corner round the cross-road. I wanted to bow my head to you for the mighty beginning.

An Invitation

If it is to mean anything at all and confer benefits which will endure, if it is to serve as a forerunner of the "New World" yet to be, the community project in India has to be planned as a silent and bloodless revolution in the spirit of her people. The three hundred and fifty million citizens of India who are refugees wholesale, in their own homeland, will have to be rehabilitated as citizens of the "New World" now in the making. The ghosts of two hundred years which are a dead-weight round her neck, a sub-conscious nightmare, have to be exorcised from the field.

India had arts, crafts and techniques which were at one time the envy of the world, which dazzled and attracted visitors from all lands and climes. The techniques have to be revived, not on new moorings, but on old anchorage adapted to the changed times. Revival of her soul, and the awakening of it to the consciousness of the present and to the vision of the future will have to constitute the crux of the effort, or else imported money and techniques will end in creating only the shell; substance will be missing. When it is all over, may be, what will then have been left behind, will be a house divided against itself. A new battle will then, perforce, begin. That may embroil in the changed and small

world of today all others in the cauldron.

Imported money into India on the community project must needs therefore come not as a one-way gift but as a "Give and take". Otherwise the hands of both will get stained. India has had poise in her life to a disease. Ceaseless unrest in the dynamic West has grown to an equal malady. The new world in the making can weld into shape only, if the East and the West are wedded afresh in a new contract of matrimony. India represents the opium of the East, America the fever of the West today. It is fateful that the two are trying to meet together for the new synthesis. The West needs a dose of the opium. The East, a good dip in the fever. The balance that will result may perhaps represent a solvent of all the conflicting ideologies that threaten the world asunder.

Technical assistance for the community project in India therefore has to be oriented on completely unorthodox patterns. It must aim not to uproot the refugees from what little moorings they are hugging on to and impose a new anchorage alien to their geography. It should aim, instead, at the revival of the old techniques and the revitalization of the same on the pattern of the new world. Friends who hail to offer technical assistance to India must needs therefore rid themselves of the crusader's zeal. They must come with humility to this cradle of ancient men, they must first take a dip in this Ganga of life, and then extend a helping hand to a fellow brother steeped in bondage—who

could be awakened out of the ghost-ridden nightmare.

Community project in India shall be conducted strictly on this line. The effort from within or from without will have to fit into this pattern, if it is to receive a willing acceptance. Irrigation, reclamation of land, use of improved techniques and implements, use of fertilizer are all good means. So also are the new methods of production and utilisation in industries, the patterns of housing, both rural and urban, the mass techniques of public health, adult and child's education. But these are sheer means to one basic end—man. True, man is a product of his environment. Equally is it true however that the environment is the product of man. The physical environment offers relatively easier moulding. The human environment needs a steeper climb. In the hustle of time, this basic difference tends to be ignored, and we face still-born offspring.

The "New World" is in the making, slowly but steadily. The embryo is taking shape. There is no frontier. Friends and comrades from all corners of the world are welcome to present themselves as offerings to the heralding of the "New Age".

III

Moving Finger Writes

Community Projects in India

'INQUILAB ZINDABAD' rent the air and reverberated in the sky as voices in millions rose to greet the midnight bell that tolled the advent of freedom on the fateful night of August 15, 1947. Alien rulers gone, people had to take charge of the country, people's servants who were recruited by a colonial administration had to be rechristened and baptised for the new motivation. People's representatives who bled and sweated in the battle for freedom had to be re-oriented to take reins afresh, this time, for a more exacting but a thrilling new task—the task of clearing the debris of past centuries, exorcising the ghosts that haunt the sacred field, and building afresh the foundation of a "New India" for which the waves of the ocean and the snows of the Himalayas girdling her frontiers, have been crying for a thousand years and more. The people of India, the teeming masses who have been the dumb victim of the cyclonic coming and fading of new empires had to be awakened to the new reality—the reality of the dispelling of a nightmare, of the rights and obligations in the new-found freedom. The next task was to bring the three together—the people, people's representatives and the people's servants in a tripartite movement each doing its individual assignment yet locked arm in arm to the final destiny—"New India"—

“New World”—“New Horizon”.

Five Year Plan was designed to be the first organised effort of the India Government to build the country on the willing consent of her people. The plan proceeded building dams across whimsical and mighty rivers, harnessing the water for irrigation, light and power to the countryside, rehabilitating railways which had gone into disrepair due to the wear and tear of World War II, building trunk roads for communications, housing for industrial workers, providing minor irrigation and allied facilities for speeding up the “Grow More Food” campaign and then providing for education and health facilities to the teeming millions. The plan proceeded apace with mandate from people. Big factories and spacious research laboratories began to spring up like islands in a dream. But the people for whom the plan is meant were nowhere about. The mansion was in the making. But the foundation was still in the air, for a country stands not on buildings, parks and boulevards but on the shoulders of the men, women and children who dwell therein. The realisation came. A new plan had to be drawn—a plan on the Missing Link—the people. The plan had to be such as would have a content—material, intellectual and spiritual all combined in one. It was to be of the people, for the people, by the people. The quest led to the community project—an addendum to India’s Five Year Plan yet really a foundation to it. It is the “Dynamo providing the motive force behind the Five Year Plan” was the message with which the Prime Minister of India christened the new

scheme. Community Project Scheme started simultaneously in all the States in 1952. The day of inauguration was October 2, birthday of the "Soldier without sword"—Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the "New Nation". 55 projects were launched, each covering a population of about 200,000 spread over approximately 300 villages divided in three blocks together or spread out as conditions dictated. The cost of a project was estimated originally at 65 lakhs of rupees which was reduced to 45 lakhs based on experience immediately following inauguration.

On the material side the programme includes assistance in agriculture, such as provision of better seeds, compost manure, commercial fertilizers, improved implements and improved cultural practices, promotion of fruit and vegetable gardening, reclamation and terracing of land, consolidation of fragmented land holdings, etc.; in animal husbandry—promotion of pedigree birds, cattle, sheep and fisheries, artificial insemination and qualified veterinary aid; in irrigation—provision of wells, tanks, tube-wells, small dams, mechanical lift from river streams; in communications—building of feeder and village roads, bridges, culverts and causeways, promotion of mechanical and animal transport; in public health—provision of drinking water, drainage, environmental sanitation and anti-epidemic measures, medical aid to the ailing, ante and prenatal aid to mothers and children; in village industries—provision of improved skills, tools and implements to existing artisans, training of new artisans and promotion of food processing and

other allied industries to cater for the optimum regional self-sufficiency in matters of day to day rural needs ; in housing—promotion of better housing in villages, admitting more air and light, clearing of slums, promotion of parks and playgrounds for children and adults, community halls such as library and panchayat ghars, mandi centres which will provide marketing and storage facilities while housing medical, veterinary, educational and administrative services alongside; in education—expansion of primary and secondary education, imparting of craft bias and manual skill as an integral part of the new curriculum ; promotion of social education which includes besides adult literacy, programme for indigenous sports and congregations round common folklore, viz., 'Bhajans', 'Kirtans', 'Kavi Darbars', 'Mushairas'¹, dance, music and recitation and lastly, cooperation and panchayat movement to weave the community afresh both for civic and economic purposes around common activities provided for the project.

Mind and materials had been proceeding without respite towards the commercial and law-and-order-maintaining towns and cities provided by the alien rulers. A mode of life foreign to the soil, was being thrust unwillingly. The multipurpose approach was designed to fill the void which had been yawning progressively wider in the life of rural India during recent decades because of this one-way traffic. The immediate need is increased production especially in the

1. Symposium on poetry.

primary food sector. Production needs healthy arms willing to exert for the effort. Healthy arm presupposes healthy head and heart, clear arteries and a buoyant psychology. The body of man is an indivisible whole. The material approach to the body of our life in the villages has perforce to be of an indivisible multipurpose character. The present gaps wide as they are, needed quick hormone treatment if they were to fill up from within rapidly enough to activate the movement for the great onward march.

On the mental plane, the programme has been equally comprehensive. There is provision for an enormous expansion of education for children and adults alike. The field for mental gymnastics is also there open on all sides. The planning of the programme for each one according to needs and capacity, and yet all pulling on together is vested in the community. Be it in the cropping and irrigation pattern for individual fields or the siting of the village school, library or panchayat ghar, the building of roads, the siting of medical or veterinary facilities, the final decision rests on the individual as expressed conjointly through the Gram Vikas Mandal (village development body) and finally through the Block Development Committees which include besides the village representatives, the spokesmen of the region in the District Board, the State Legislature and the nation's Parliament. Government servants are also there, from the Village Level Worker up to the administrator—the Collector of the District who is the top representative of the Government at the District

level. The plans thus emerge through these joint deliberations from the grassroots up.

On the spiritual side a unique challenge faces the tripartite movement. The programme for its implementation depends on the willing integration of the three agencies making up the whole. The people, the people's representatives, and the people's servants have to work together as a unit at every stage and every link of the programme. Government finances being limited, perhaps a great blessing in disguise, people have to supplement the resources placed by Government with those of their own in cash, kind and labour all combined. People's representatives who have all too overpowering a natural gravitation towards individual survival have to sink their personal feelings and ambitions, and join the chorus if the echo of the right amplitude is to be evoked from amongst the people whom they are supposed to represent and whose trust and faith alone they can stand upon, in the chequer-board of the ballot-box hereafter. This means as a corollary that people's representatives in office or without, have at all levels to think together and act together and move as a single chain surrendering at times to drastic limits, individual wills and wiles to the mass-will as represented by the single line movement.

On the side of the people's servants a similar phenomenon has to repeat with precision if the chorus is not to misfire into a chaos. Government servants who had hitherto functioned in their ivory towers in splendid isolation from the people that they governed, have to undergo a

radical reorientation if they are to play the new role of serving the new Master—the People of “New India”. The individual approach to the villager by multiple functionaries of Government each presenting a separate front had to be replaced by a multipurpose approach through a single functionary strictly in line with the multipurpose objective of the scheme. The functionary known popularly as the Village Level Worker or Gram Sewak, is normally a young person with basic training in agriculture, but specially oriented in methods of extension primarily in fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, public health, cooperation and social education. He also receives rudimentary training in cottage and village industries. There are ten Village Level Workers in a Block of 100 villages with a population of 60-70 thousand.

At the Block level, there is a Block Development Officer who is in administrative charge of the individual programme. He is assisted by a team of individual specialists—specialised in agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, panchayats, public health, rural engineering, social education, village industries, and women’s activities. The Block Development Officer is responsible to the Collector of the District, the specialists being connected with their counterparts at the District level. The Collector is responsible for the programme to the Development Commissioner and the District specialists to their counterparts at the State level. The Development Commissioner is responsible for the programme to the State Development Committee

headed by the State Chief Minister with Ministers of all Development Departments as members of the Committee. At the Central level the functionary responsible for the programme is the Central Minister. He in turn is responsible to a Central Committee headed by the Prime Minister.

Special training programme in extension and the multipurpose approach is being conducted for all functionaries including the Village Level Workers. Social Education Organisers are receiving five months' special training. Training facilities also exist for health and other specialists. There is job and orientation training for Block Development Officers. Periodic seminars are a common feature for orientation of all staff from the Village Level Worker to the Development Commissioner and for the subject-matter specialists throughout the line. Coordination is thus achieved at all levels between all development agencies. The single line command and the effort accompanying it reaches the individual villager on the primary decision originally emanating from him. The implementation of the programme and its progress from stage to stage and facet to facet has constituted for "New India" a yardstick for the measurement of administrative and technical efficiency, of coordination and integration of the people's programme between the people, the people's representatives and the people's servants in the battle with sand, sweat and mortar—the mighty leveller of castes and classes which have been the arch enemies of India till today.

The concept of the community project which was started as an experiment, has found expression in a new development administration in the permanent organisation of the National Extension Service. This in turn has been integrated with the existing administration in the law and order and revenue biased State. People have already contributed in cash, kind and labour an amount which in substance exceeds the total expenditure incurred to date by Government. They can do still more, but the age old Government machinery designed originally for a different purpose, clogged and rusted in the vital joints, is yet not fully ready to match and cope with the people's effort. The same applies to the people's representatives. Great as their effort was in fighting the alien ruler, the new phase of constructive activity which demands disciplined intelligence and concerted outlook on the National level is yet to grow. It has to be an organic development, for we have banned the use of force. The mind of man, therefore, has to find a new level on its own. Hormone treatment on this field has inherent risks. Therefore, the effort has to be hard and long drawn out. Progress will perforce be slow and gradual.

The Welfare State conceived in the Constitution of "New India" is the objective of the new quest and effort. If it succeeds, and it must, it will be India's own contribution to the field of extension. She would then have enlarged the agency and concept of extension not merely to serve an economic or a political end but for harmonising the body, mind and spirit of the

individual into a new blend. The blend will have to be based on the logic of the present age and the cultural moorings of India such as can spread out with open arms up to the distant horizon. Will India succeed? She did in the past. Philosophy of India is a synthesis of all the philosophies of the world. Through the pages of history she has offered home for all, malice to none. May be in the small seed that we sowed on October 2, 1952, in memory of the birthday of the Great Martyr, we planted the clue to the World State. The future alone can tell. Meantime, the lone villager with the shovel in hand takes his stand on the soil alongside his new-found friends—his representative and his servant.

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

In the battle for our freedom, we fought in the name of the large masses of humanity that inhabited this sub-continent, 82 per cent of them lived in the countryside parched grey by then. We pinned our faith in democracy unadulterated and based it on franchise for the adult. Democracy can be sound and secure on paper ; but in life it can be so if only the bulk of the adults understand and accept its implications with the rights and obligations both combined. The Parliamentary system has perforce to travel from the Capital to the most obscure of the outposts—our villages. Autonomous State Legislatures have to be followed by local self-government institutions reflecting the head, heart and hand of the people at all intermediate levels upto the village panchayats. Local self-government institutions in India whether District Boards, Taluqa Boards or panchayats wherever they existed had gone largely decadent, what with limitation on resources, what with internal feuds based on wealth, caste and communal interests. Urgent steps therefore had to be taken first to offer immediate relief to the teeming millions, and secondly to draw up a scheme of development that could be implemented with speed involving the people and their representatives in its sweep.

The Government apparatus in the pre-independence age had been trained in a school totally different from the one that the new situation called for. The old school of training was designed to provide the know-how as regards how to keep a people down, how to extract the cream out of them without their revolting in the process. If nation-building departments existed in the past, they were more to meet the form than to provide substance. Officers of Government naturally grew to be past-masters in the art of stalling action. Before Independence, the Government apparatus took its order from the Viceroy in the Centre and the Governors in the States. British rule was succeeded by democracy which was an experience totally new to India. In this infant democracy, the Viceroy at the Centre and the Governors in the States were replaced overnight by Cabinets composed of the chosen representatives of the people. One-man rule had to find its new expression in collective thinking and coordinated action. This tradition however takes time to grow, and much more to strike roots. The legacies of the past add further to the travail. The transition from a regime of autocracy to one of a democratic instrument of decision propelling a monolithic instrument of action was bound to be an uneasy one. Villages had to be resuscitated if democracy was to survive. Even as a short-term objective, villages had to be taken in hand as a top priority, for agriculture constituted our vital industry as also the sole where-withal on which life could thrive. If this was to be attempted, the first pre-requisite was to awaken

the villages even with some noise if needs be. A colossus such as our countryside represents, cannot be awakened without serious risk, unless on waking up it can have a "Dogtail" to straighten.

! Community Development Programme in India came as the logical answer to the question of the hour. The programme starting with limited areas has spread over the bulk of the country. There is combined impact of all nation building activities—agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation, village industries, education, social education, public health, communications, village housing, cooperation, panchayats. Different Ministries in the Centre and corresponding Departments in the States handled these various specialties. How to get them together for the common purpose? We took the decision, very wisely as we see now, of working these pilot projects as virtually self-contained islands of reconstruction with representatives deputed from various Departments but only loosely connected with the parent organisations. A Government apparatus alone cannot work up a people's programme. Therefore, people's representatives had to come in for participation at least in the planning and review of the programme at the Block level. In the sphere of action, namely in the villages, both planning and implementation had to be vested in the people's organisation—the panchayats and the cooperatives, and in their absence in ad hoc institutions like Vikas Mandals and Gram Mangal Samitis and such other institutions as could be brought into being. The

representatives at the level of the Block and in the village had to function in an advisory capacity, the final powers of decisions remaining in the Government apparatus for the time being. Funds had to be provided specially earmarked for implementation of the programme, and the organisation linked up from the village upto the Centre so that the Government apparatus could be buttressed as also balanced at every point by a corresponding non-official organisation.

If mountain would not come to Muhammed, Muhammed has to travel to the mountain. Our technical departments functioned virtually as show-pieces spread at best up to the level of the Tehsil with a charge of 200,000 to a million people, with little or no finance. If assistance in the form of finance, technical advice and supplies had to flow to the people, the organisation of Government had to travel right up to the people. So came the concept of the Block headquarters with Extension Officers dealing with agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, social education, rural engineering, public health and village industries, coordinated by a Block Development Officer with a charge of 60,000 to 70,000 of rural population. To transmit the multi-purpose resources of this organisation to the village came the new functionary, the Gram Sewak, basically trained in agriculture but given first-aid training in all other subjects of rural development with a charge roughly of ten villages with a population of six to seven thousand. This new functionary—“Gram Sewak” was expected to cater to all the

needs of rural people in his charge and do so increasingly through local institutions of the people. Within a few months of the launching of the pilot programme on October 2, 1952, the people in the areas covered, woke up as if by the touch of a magic wand. Roads, schools, panchayat ghars, bridges, and culverts, lanes and drains in villages started coming into being with the effort of the villagers themselves before the government apparatus could even get geared for issue of financial assistance which was in its custody. The asleep opened their eyes, the hunchback stood erect with spade and shovel in hand. It was indeed a Grand March. Villages, the estwhile citadel of reaction woke up and claimed their place of pride on the new map of India.

Pilot projects showed that there is no room for two governments under one sovereign government. If the programme of regeneration of our villages involving all nation-building activities of government had to forge ahead, it was of prime importance to get the Departments of government to take the initiative of the programme. Ministry of Community Development at the Centre, the organisation of the Development Commissioner in the States, the Collector as the District Development Officer, the Block Development Officer at the Block and the Gram Sewak at the level of the village, were primarily for coordination and to provide such administrative assistance as the Departments needed in order that they could function as the technical specialists in the employment of government

which is their main and only term of reference. The projects came across the acute shortage of training and experience in our manpower, the mass unemployment notwithstanding. They brought into sharp focus the utter divorce from realities which afflicted our training institutions and our research centres. They underlined the communal and parochial interests that prevail on the ground and which retard and even prevent community organisations such as will enable the many to resist the yoke of the few. They showed how unresponsive the normal apparatus of the Government is in its functioning at the village level. They showed also how deeply entrenched the forces of government and the minority vested interests are, and how determined they are to resist any onslaught on their citadel.

Diagnosis of an ailment can at best be a half remedy provided the other half is attended to simultaneously. There has been a substantial expansion in institutions for the training of doctors and allied health personnel, of agricultural specialists, of veterinarians, of engineers, of educationists and educators, of Gram Sewaks, and Gram Sewikas—the last link of today in the Welfare State in making. Institutions for the training of these rural workers are being brought increasingly in touch with rural areas through extension courses which are an integral feature of the new curriculum. Even students of academic courses in Universities are being brought in tens and thousands to the villages through special camps organised by the Bharat Sewak Samaj

and other non-official institutions, through National Cadet Corps and A.C.C. camps organised by the Defence Ministry, through special apprenticeship alongside Gram Sewaks in their circles. Research Centres in Agriculture and Animal Husbandry are being brought in touch with surrounding villages through work of extension. The National Science Laboratories working under the Central Ministry of Natural Resources and Scientific Research are arranging to set up cells of extension so that they can grow to be more ground-oriented and in turn make contribution to the daily needs of the people.

Village people are participating in increasing numbers in the new pilgrimage across India through Bharat Darshan Trains. Their leaders are participating in District seminars which are meeting-points of officials and non-officials in open forums. New schemes are already being forged for selected Panches to travel in other regions so that they get out of their present limited outlook. The village people are no longer afraid of opening their minds and hearts to officials whom they dreaded in the past. They do not hesitate to approach their representatives from the ground upto the nation's Capital. Work with hand which had formerly grown to be an object of contempt has now acquired a new dignity. Village people in all parts of India without exception, have in fact contributed as much as they have been called upon, in cash, kind and labour both for community works as also on items of individual interest.

Contributions of people to community works alone account for about 60 per cent of the total expenditure incurred on the programme by Government. This does not take into consideration enormous programmes undertaken by individuals in every field of endeavour from agriculture to new housing. The Government apparatus especially the agency handling the programme of coordination from the Centre down to the District level has by and large undergone a transformation in outlook, a feature to be seen and felt to be believed. In the field of physical accomplishment, the performance under the programme is something of which one can legitimately be proud. Whether in the field of agriculture or of others that relate to rural life, the effort in the area so far covered represents an increase in concentration ranging between 100 to 300 per cent. The reflection of these even in the field of food production is not insignificant as the National Sample Survey through successive studies confirms.

Yet with all these, the programme suffers from several vital gaps. Achievement to date, cannot be maintained much less improved upon unless these gaps are closed. The transformation in the outlook of officials mentioned earlier is yet to travel fully to the Block Development Officer and the Gram Sewak. With the bulk of the leaders of our people, compulsorily away in the nation's Parliament and the State Legislatures for long spells, there is a "power vacuum" in rural areas. Two forces face each other—the minority whose future is at stake namely

the landlords, money-lenders, priests or others claiming leadership on heredity and other considerations, and the majority—the toiling millions who have maintained the minority in their unearned splendour. Where the leadership has been free from these considerations, the Block Development Officer with his entire team including the Gram Sewaks has in fact functioned as the new servant of a new free people pulsating, and vying with one another on efforts of reconstruction. Where the leadership has not been free—and this alas! holds good for the vast sections in the countryside—the benefits of the programme have tended to flow in their bulk to relatively few, the bulk of the people sharing only in community works like the roads, the culverts, the drinking water wells, the village schools, the panchayat and community halls, the health and maternity centres and other minor items of public health. Economic benefits have necessarily not flowed to them with equity. The Block staff including the Gram Sewaks have tended unwittingly to act as handmaid to the relatively well-to-do.

Land being limited in extent and landless labour being in abundance, there has been little expansion in the means of permanent employment to this section of the community. Village industries programme having just emerged out of its ideological conflicts into an integrated pattern from the spinning wheel to the machine, is yet to strike root. Whereas in the field of agriculture there is no problem of marketing, in the field of industries this constitutes the

biggest hurdle. Production and consumption have to be inter-related. With our natural allergy to controls, quick results grow even more difficult. Our techniques of production, especially in the field of village industries, are by and large what they were 2,500 years ago. Knowledge and practice of advanced techniques cannot however grow overnight. Village industries therefore will take time to play their role in raising the level of our economy. Meantime, in the vacuum of employment opportunities, our landlords and other interests who depend on cheap labour would necessarily resist any rise in the level of consciousness in the under-privileged section of the village community.

Programme of women and children presents the next hurdle. If our men folks, at least the bulk of them, have been subjected to a social tyranny for 1,300 years, our tyranny over women dates farther back. Women present a virgin force which one has to be extremely circumspect in unleashing. Here again in the strict compartmentalisation of society between man and woman, women workers grow to be an essential pre-requisite for any substantial effort. In a democracy and a growing one at that, the Members of Parliament and State Legislatures have a dual role—legislative and constructive. Constructive work of legislators cannot be consummated in a vacuum. It has to be related to well-conceived plans of reconstruction in which the members have a distinct place for themselves. They alone can give the wider guidance to the village leaders and galvanise them for the new

community outlook. Despite the constitution of the Block Development Committees and the District Planning Committees, there has been a gulf between the Government apparatus and the people's representatives in their approach to the people at the field level. The responsibility for this cleavage is shared fairly evenly by both the agencies.

The programme despite its multiple facets must be of single impact, if it is to be implemented effectively. The initiative for the programme continues to remain vested in the administrative apparatus. It is yet to travel to the developmental agencies handling different specialities. The initiative can be shared by Departments partly with growth of field experience and partly under the pressure of public opinion as expressed on the ground, in State Legislatures and in Parliament. Any course of permanent reconstruction especially one that relates to 36 crores of people slumbering and sinking for 1,300 years is perforce going to be a zig-zag one. There can be no short-cut.

To sum up, there has been activity on the part of the Government apparatus. There has also been self-help from the people almost as much as we could ask for. But self-reliance is yet to grow. Self-reliance except for a Robinson Crusoe who is now a rare feature in society, will have to be based on the community. Community as an institution for permanent growth can only be woven around leaders freely elected—leaders who would lead the community and not themselves. Such leaders can be helped to grow

under a good governmental system. Leaders cannot be created by the system itself. Government apparatus in a democracy is there to carry out the behest of the people with honesty, competence and dynamism. By its very terms of reference it is precluded from participation in class or group rivalries. To expect the Government apparatus, which has had the tradition of ruling at the village level, to act a subservient role there on its own volition is to ask for the impossible. Leaders at all levels must take charge of the situation and be prepared to function institutionally for guidance and correctives to the system when it develops kinks and idiosyncrasies. If our democracy is to be a stable and effective one, it is of the utmost importance that the Government apparatus which is the instrument of action should remain ever sharp, and that simultaneously the people's agency should develop its weight and wisdom in corresponding proportion.

The training centres brought into being under this programme have been designed to inject the spirit of a mission in the workers who undergo the training. With increasing association of non-official representatives of people with these institutions and more experience, the quality of training will no doubt improve as time passes. The Central Institute of Community Development will act as the apex unit for guidance to institutions of training all along the line. Non-officials must play their part in the programme if the tone of training is to be what we aim at. The decision taken to cover the country has to be

adhered to, despite all the difficulties involved. It is also necessary, in order to ensure that there will be no area of operation left in the country in which existing departments of government can find outlet for their isolated uncoordinated efforts. Departments have to subordinate their individual supremacy in favour of the wider sovereignty that collective work connotes. This is an unhappy decision for many. The transition must needs therefore be made as short as humanly possible so that there can be an integrated single line pattern of the welfare administration which National Extension Service visualises.

Ministries in the Centre have begun to play their role in this vital programme. There have been definite procedures laid down for coordination between the work of the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Food & Agriculture, the Ministry of Commerce & Industries, and the Central Social Welfare Board. Procedures for coordination are being worked out with other Ministries in the Centre. The Central Committee presided over by the Prime Minister with Members of the Planning Commission, the Minister for Food & Agriculture and the Minister for Community Development provides the overall coordination to the programme. Coordination at the State level is being brought about in a similar way progressively. The elected representatives of people both at the Centre and in the States have begun by now to play a vital role in the promotion of this objective.

The programme of Community Development

has worked during the past years largely as a government programme with communities of people hanging loose on the landscape. If the programme is to grow into one of Community Development, communities have to be woven round their leaders in appropriate institutions. The government apparatus has by now learnt to recognise its own limitations in a democracy. It is asking for help with open arms at least at higher levels. The answer as to whether the programme will be one of development to be sustained continually by the largesse from government, or could be one self-perpetuating on the strength of the community itself, will depend on how those that man the government apparatus and those that man the non-official institutions of people in the Parliament and State Legislature react to and meet each other on the field of action. India seems to hold the key for the regeneration of the underdeveloped world in Asia and Africa which had been victims of two centuries, bypassed by an industrial age. The new age is round the corner. The split atom brings us message of hope and life from the far corners of the universe. We have to make up for the age bypassed. The temptation will be great to bypass man in our rush for materials of which we have been deprived. Community Development in India has offered a glimpse of the way to the 'Manzil' ahead. If the people, their representatives and their servants are to march hand in hand, the programme cannot be the charge of one agency alone.

People Planning for Themselves

Cotton plants are in blossom on the black soil. The bullocks plod up and down the slope adjoining the well. The farmer is busy plying the 'Charsa'.¹ Yonder flows the streamlet hailing from the distant hill silhouetted against the setting sun. The bed of the stream is dry but for a trickle that creeps between the sands.

The panchayat ghar stands on the bank of the streamlet on a mound over-looking the undulating countryside. Villagers have gathered on the barren lawn. The hurricane lantern casts out dim streaks of light through the gathering darkness. The register in front of the lamp describes the individual plots of land owned by the villagers. Villagers discourse on the pattern of cropping for the coming season, the seeds they have and what more they need. They talk about fertilizer and how to pool credit for its procurement. They draw up plans for village roads and housing, parks and fuel forests, schools and first-aid posts, drains and sanitation, for the new panchayat ghar, the 'Chaupal'² and light posts for the village. They discourse about cottage and small scale industries, on plans to exterminate poverty the great curse. They draw up alternative plans to store the water of

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1. A leather bucket for irrigating from deep wells.
 2. Place of gathering for the village community.

the adjoining streamlet during monsoon months and then harness it for irrigation to the fields which run dry during the rest of the year.

“It is the responsibility of Pandit Nehru whom we made the Prime Minister, and his Government to build the dam and provide us the wherewithal for a life of prosperity. Why should they expect us to scratch our brain and tax our muscle on these elements of life which are our birthright?” shouts a disgruntled voice. The silence of the night is broken by angry protests all round till a young voice rises above the tumult and takes control of the situation. Long discourse follows explaining India—the land of the five-hundred and fifty thousand villages, the ravages done during the two-thousand years of our descent, the lower output of our soil as compared to other lands including China ; how even in our own land, farmers typically the same as in this village are getting the titles of ‘Krishi Pandits’¹ with additional prizes in cash or kind by producing many times more on the same type of soil with but utilisation of better seeds, compost and green manure, better implements and a wee bit of extra care. The youngman narrates how America, the land of the sky-scrapers, automobiles, telephones and radios, of milk, food and dollars unlimited was a jungle inhabited by wild beasts of all descriptions only three hundred years ago and how it rollicks today with smiles and laughter all round because the people therein were wise enough to leave

1. A title conferred by the Indian Government on those who produce the highest yield per acre.

Providence and the President to mind their own business, and themselves take to the shovel and the hammer. The evening advances deep into the night. The 'Vikas Mandal'¹ retires for the day to meet again next evening.

'Vikas Mandal' in another Block sowed fish fries and spawns in the village tanks, which, with the abolition of 'Malguzari'², must, as a matter of course, vest in the community. Fish fries thrown two to three years ago are thirty to thirty-six pounds a piece. Those thrown two months ago are already a pound. There is an average of five tanks to a village based on an average of five acres. According to the experts, an acre can hold a thousand fish. The fish under trial is of the carp variety, fat and plump, strictly of the vegetarian species. It needs only moss for food which grows at the bottom of the tank on the base of village sullage and washings. Simple arithmetic shows that after allowing for all possible contingencies the fishery project can offer a hundred pounds of fish to every village family and besides earn a hundred rupees per family per year after paying for the fishermen and other contingent expenditure. 'Vikas Mandals' look forward to flooding fish-famined Calcutta with fish at a rupee a seer and establish for themselves with the proceeds, the basic capital for the village multipurpose society. Five lakhs of fish spawns and fries have already been invested in the tanks. More in multiples are on the way. The only problem is to save

1. Development club.
2. Revenue on land.

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the growing fish from its predatory brethren in the water and its biped counterpart on land. Money-lenders and black-marketeers are already itching to form syndicates taking over the tanks released from the 'Malguzars'.¹ The Madhya Pradesh Government is alert to the menace, so also are the new born 'Vikas Mandals'.

Planning Commission draws up plan for the country. The plan can have no meaning for the common man unless there is simultaneous planning from the ground upwards so that when the tree does take shape the branches, twigs and leaves, not to mention the trunk, will be anchored firmly to the soil through the roots which will spread far and deep. The tree must, therefore, grow from the bottom. The community project staff can but act as the 'Bahisti'² for the Nursery and the 'Mali'³ to adjust the light and shade according to the needs of the plants. I saw ancient India gushing out for a renaissance in the eyes and the voice of the uncorrupted sons and daughters of these villages. They understand life better than we, who recite 'Mantrams' only and concoct the jugglery of statistics. I saw "The religion of man" in the throes of its birth agony. I understood for the first time what the Prime Minister meant when he cried for the birth of the "Builders of the future" out of the ashes of past, out of the dust that stands mute and dumb in our countryside.

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1. Those who pay land revenue—landlord.
 2. Water carrier.
 3. Gardener.

The Moving Finger Writes

Silence is golden in the court of the wise. It suffers from grave limitations in the atmosphere of a jungle. Our urban people have had their education in the school of words. Words are meant to be used on paper or in a chorus. Urban people can make themselves felt, thick and concentrated as they are. They have a common interest. When it comes to a question of getting "Something for nothing", they can, on the slightest pretext, attempt to paralyse the Government, especially a growing Government such as ours. The village people are spread out in space. The rulers in the past helped them to divide against themselves. The process was accelerated further when their natural leaders were attracted to the cities on one bait or the other. It was but natural that in the jungle of India which we inherited on August 15, 1947, our resources would be monopolised by those who could shout the loudest. But the heart of India that hibernated in her 5,50,000 slumbering villages had its voice gagged. It had no way of making itself felt except through the wistful eyes and rickety bones that only could rattle against themselves. With the immediate problem of relief and rehabilitation of displaced persons somewhat eased and under the urge to begin thinking in the direction of India's primary

citizens, the Government in power came face to face with the problem. The Community Development Programme was the first significant symbol of an effort to honour the cheque that was drawn on the nation in the days of the fateful struggle.

As we look back over the packed but short fragment of the history that is being re-written, it becomes clear that people whom we dubbed dumb and mute, and whom we accused of the congenital instinct for internecine feuds to no purpose have really not been so. They have been fighting between themselves because they were deprived of all natural outlet. Their dumbness, we see, was a sign of wisdom ; their feuds a sign of vitality. They have risen en masse wherever we have made the call. They have responded to our call for the application of scientific techniques far exceeding our expectations and assuredly our resources. Strangely enough the more backward the people, the greater has been the response both on individual and community fronts. More intellectual the people are, less has been the action, but more the deliberations. All this goes to prove that the education we feel proud of, has been just the opposite of what it should be, that by and large it has excelled only in imparting the art of pick-pocketing. Government officials from the State Capital down to the ground had little or no contact with the people. They have been suspects in the eyes of the people as also their representatives, so much so that they had no outlet for their energies—physical or mental.

They were busy consuming themselves in merry-go-round on paper, tightrope-dancing in the circus or yawning against the clock on the wall. But once entrusted with a live assignment, their character was transformed overnight. The ivory tower dweller shunned the ivory and tower both and plunged headlong for the ground—the new destination. The jigsaw puzzle on the merry-go-round is no more, nor the suicidal thoughts of who superseded whom. Grease and dirt characterise, as a rule, the working of the administrative agency from the State Capital down to the ground. The agency has been charged with electricity. The wire is live. No one can fail to get the shock if he touches it wittingly or unwittingly.

But this country had a population of 365 millions in 1951. It has been multiplying at the rate of one and a quarter per hundred every year. A relatively small administrative agency cannot cope with the rising needs of a resurgent people who woke up after two thousand years of opium slumber. Besides, an atomic age is on us, whether or not we like it. We have, besides, to make up for 200 years of science that has bypassed us as a people. Technical functionaries with science as their armour and with the second half of the twentieth century flowing in their arteries will have to come in to take their due share of this new age of compensation, if the gap is to be made up and we as a people are to be in tune with what is happening around. Basic knowledge of technical science and the experience for its application does not grow

unhappily through an administrative fiat. Good administration can, of course, ease the travail in the transition. It can do no more. Our schools and colleges dealing with pure and applied sciences, therefore, will have to be brought nearer to the ground. The gospel of the dirty hand has to reach out for the ivory tower of the faculties in the same way as it spread and affected the administrative machinery of Government. Our technical services hailing from these revitalized centres of learning will have to be given reception appropriate to their new status. They have to be initiated into the new system to be members of the common brotherhood in this executive arm of the Welfare State now in the making.

The administrative agency of Government has acquitted itself admirably in the primary test of its dealing with the people. The secondary test, however, is going to be more difficult, as it will make calls which will be much more exacting. For, hereafter, it will be the character of the administrative agency and those manning it rather than its control over the character-roll it wields that will decide the extent to which it can strengthen, stimulate and inspire the technical agencies of Government to share the initiative which has been its monopoly heretofore. The initiative must be shared, for the administrative agency has stretched itself to the farthest limit of its endurance already. It is bound to recoil on its own vitals, if it cannot find partners on the expanding horizon. It is this that will determine if the pitched battles

we have waged so far are to grow into the conflagration we looked for, or the whole programme is to end in having been but a pastime for sightseers and picnickers.

The Development Ministries in the Centre, even though they have no direct responsibility in the States, are coming to recognise the need for extension agencies such as can assist their counterparts in the States in carrying the messages of modern science in their respective specialties down to the people. The extension agencies in the Ministry of Food & Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, are but forerunners. Others are bound to come in to join the surging tide unleashed by this programme. The extension agencies attached to the Central Ministries, however, will be of little avail unless State Departments which have direct responsibilities with the people, follow the same line of development fast and extensive enough to fit in with the demands that are mounting from the ground. The administrative agency in the State, namely the organisation of the Development Commissioner, will now be in a position to begin playing the role as the fulcrum of the State planning organisation. But if this is to be so, the administrative agency in the State will have to apprise itself fully with the physical and moral demands to which it has to rise, and prepare itself accordingly.

In a totalitarian agency of Government where the party and the Government are one, a monolithic agency of Government sufficient unto itself is perhaps a practical proposition.

Of course, even this remains to be seen in the countries which are following this system. In a growing democracy which is wedded to a socialist pattern such as ours, the Government agency is but an instrument of action, at the behest of the people. People's representatives must come into the picture intertwined with the Government agency at every link of the hierarchy. The Union Parliament rules over the Government machinery at the Centre. The same holds good for the State Legislature vis-a-vis the State apparatus of Government. But as a forum for the people, the State Legislature is far too remote from the ground where the people are, in the reorganised States we have in India today. Democracy from above cannot be real unless it is a two-way traffic in both thought and action. Intermediate institutions of people spreading from the State Legislature, till we reach the villages in the panchayat, are therefore an essential prerequisite, if democracy is not to be reduced to feudalism of a new kind. Signs are already there that it will tend to be so, unless we follow the logic of democracy down to the people.

The organisation handling the Community Development Programme today cannot decide whether the next level of the people's forum should be below the State Legislature. But it can serve to precipitate the decision, as in fact it must as a part of its term of reference. Fortunately, the Government machinery as a whole today is seized of this problem. A part of the credit is no doubt due to the forces of contradictions we have

released. We should know before long at what level the next stage of the forum should be. However, absence of an immediate directive on this point need not necessarily handicap further action. The village panchayat as an institution is as old as India. Panchayat traditions are flowing in the veins of our common people. This organisation can promote the growth of healthy panchayats by entrusting to these bodies responsibilities for execution of the programme subject to administrative guidance and technical supervision regardless of the risk which continues haunting our mind. If there is technical competence in the Government organisation and honesty of purpose, the common masses of our people, profound in core as they yet are, will know how to elect their leaders in panchayats wisely. The vested interests in villages will be compelled by the very logic of the events to direct their undoubted intelligence and aptitude to the good of the community even against the current forces gravitating to their own pockets.

Panchayats, if they are elected reasonably wisely and if they can be trained to share executive responsibilities with the Government agency with competence, will also know how to elect their representatives to the Block Development Committees, where such representatives can plan and decide wider issues, embracing the Block as a whole. The crucial question that will determine this consummation will be whether the Gram Sewaks and the Block Development Officers will grow big enough in stature

to provide room for, and promote, leadership which is to lead them eventually or they will continue paying lip sympathy to the question of village leadership and will try to promote only their henchmen who can be hangers on. Let us be clear on one particular issue. Casteism and feudalism in our villages are, of course, a reality. But the greater reality is that our Block Development Officers and our Gram Sewaks have yet to be what they are to be. We need not expect miracles overnight. But we should expect a transparent awareness of what really is the matter.

Our people have given, if we compare ourselves with others around us, a fairly creditable account of themselves in selecting their leaders who represent them in the Parliament and the State Legislature. The steady progress we have made during the years since our independence in our uphill climb and the comparative peace that rules within, despite the tribal instinct still alive in almost all of us, is clear testimony to the native wisdom of our people. We do not, of course, expect perfection in our Parliament and State Legislatures. In fact, perfection is a myth and a perfect world is one in which the race as a whole will die from supreme boredom. What does worry one, however, is how the people in future, when the present leadership is gone and past, be able to choose their leaders. We know our present leaders through half a generation of our experience with them as warriors against colonial rule. Future leadership, if it is to be real and

effective, must be confined selectively to warriors in the struggle against the present enemies that oppress the nation, namely, hunger, disease and ignorance. How do we know them unless they can be identified with the war that is already on ? How can we train them unless we offered to the budding leaders facilities for education in leadership from the primary to the post-graduate stage ? The village panchayat constitutes the primary stage for leadership training, the Block and the District the lower and higher secondary stages respectively. The State Legislature and Parliament provide the graduate and post-graduate stages. We may choose to confer a Doctorate on a Tagore, but Tagores are not born to order. The commonplace mob that we are, we need the assistance of institutionalised education. Village panchayat and the village cooperative constitute the primary stages and are, therefore, the base for the leadership of "Tomorrow". Shall we have foresight and wisdom enough to recognise this key to the future ?

The Community Development Programme has heretofore been manned predominantly by men only. We mention women more as an apology and offer excuses to ourselves that women workers are not forthcoming in adequate numbers. Women and children today constitute a little more than two-third of our population. If number has a meaning in a democracy, as it must, we should move heaven and earth to see that we take emergency measures to discharge our responsibilities to this two-third of

our population. If the Indian culture still survives despite the ravages of centuries and the necktied standard we tried our worst to establish in the drinking clubs and the ballrooms, it is because our women-folk—the mute and the dumb counterpart of men, chose to be so. The stray success we have had with women and children's activities in different parts of the country, has proved beyond any contradiction that our women intrinsically still are more vital than our men-folk. They continue remaining the main spring of the nation's energy and culture. They wait for a mere call with a clearly defined programme such as they can implement consistently with their needs and traditions. Man has lived for long on this planet. Nevertheless if one scratches the surface, one finds the hunter still very much alive in the best of our species. Woman was created as the purveyor of the race. Nature never wanted her to be frivolous with herself or her offspring. If our programme is to strike roots we have to enlist the partnership of the securer partner between man and woman. Woman, therefore, holds the key to the permanence of this programme. She has to be aroused ; she has to be enlisted ; she has to be harnessed as a member of her community, cost what may. Coordination between the Social Welfare Board and the Community Development agency is a very happy augury for the future.

The National capital is expanding fast, out of all proportion. The same is repeating,

may be in a slightly diminished form, at the State capitals. There is nothing wrong in this expansion, provided it also reflects in an appropriate expansion of similar activities in rural areas. If this does not happen, the carbuncles—our cities will grow to be still more malignant in both character and magnitude. We do not wish the sweat and blood, that goes into the mortar for this new expansion, to serve as the monument for future generations as the Kutab Minar does against the window. Villages of tomorrow are going to be wide awake, more so perhaps to their rights than to their obligations, unless we play our hand well. The villages of tomorrow will demand the fulfilment of the atomic age—a home, ample space around with light and air playing across. There will be sanitation and drainage such as modern science makes a possibility. Land will be irrigable, every inch of it, by pumping from perennial sources, through artificial rains or through the thousands of our rivers and streams and rivulets. Schools and community centres will be there in the villages, offering the very best of educational facilities which the richest in the country can claim to be heir to. Every village will be connected to its neighbour by modern means of communication, every man and woman in need of a means of livelihood will have the opportunities open for work out of a variety of professions minus the drudgery of today. Men, women and children will grow in health and share in common the exuberance that life offers in her abundance to this king of

animal. Society will provide preventive measures against microbes that are at war with life, as much as the maladjusted in our species will have domiciliary care of specialised institutions. Thus will the village of yesterday grow from a focus of exploitation to a source of transformation for tomorrow.

The Community Development Programme places the highest emphasis on "Destination Man". Nature has opened her door for him to pick from the treasure house to his very fill. Every game has certain basic rules to observe if it is to be sport and not a fraud. This game at which we are playing has only one basic rule from which all else follows. "Something for nothing" being a myth, unearned dividend is a taboo to this organisation. The programme has been destined to unleash a revolution. Revolution cannot be ushered unless those who wish to do so, have themselves undergone the revolution within. We are to traffic in fundamentals. We cannot impart what we do not possess. So, we come back to the individual heart-searching with which we had begun. The revolution is yet to come. It has only been a rehearsal so far.

IV

*Thoughts on Functionaries in the
Programme*

Gram Sewak

India has five hundred and fifty thousand villages. She also has about four thousand and five hundred cities, towns and townlets. Normally cities and towns grow as logical nerve-centres of villages at crossings of culture, commerce and traffic. This is how we had our cities and towns of old. The ancient ones are now in decay. We see only the debris of the past and occasionally the 'Pandas', 'Purohits', and 'Mullas'¹, and side by side the deaf, blind, lepers and the beggars. New cities and towns hum with autocars and buses, cinema and neon-lights. We see giant mansions and palaces, tarred and concrete roads, parks with fountains and marble statues, children in perambulators and nurses tending them. We also see interminable slums on the outskirts of the giant cities spreading out in the countryside with beggars and job-seekers, rickety children, and youth hailing from the countryside in an unceasing stream like moths towards the light on a monsoon evening. Thus the monsters grow while people decay, and the green and purple on the countryside change for the grey.

The one-way traffic has gone on for centuries—all in the name of 'Gram-sewa'². Industrialist or

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1. Priests and professional guides to the abode of God.
 2. Service of the village.

black-marketeer, lawyer or magistrate, businessman or social worker, the law breaker or the law maker, teacher or philosopher, musician or acrobat all have claimed the title of the Gram Sewak and have demanded their wages to defend and promote the rights and privileges of the countryside, from within the walls of the cities and towns. The merry-go-round perhaps could go on merrily, but for the eternal law of diminishing return which soon began to exert its logic. The countryside having dried up, the toll receipt began to fall leading to unrest in cities and towns, to decay and death in the villages. The villagers cried "Save us from our friends from the towns".

Community projects have undertaken to reverse the traffic as their prime term of reference. (Gram Sewak in the new context has therefore to acquire a new significance.) His is the role to resuscitate the country through the combined effort of the people as a whole, whom he is to weave into a new community dedicated to a new gospel of work—work to build up a smiling future over the ashes of the moribund present. He is to be the vanguard of a silent revolution. He has been trained to be the specialist generalist. He knows the ills on the countryside in rough outline. He also knows the rough and ready remedies. He carries his kit on the back-strap. He leads by showing how things can be done. He does. He is not to preach.

He is one amongst the multitude on the countryside. He shares their woes and sorrows.

He joins them in the new games and sports, the songs and music, the smiles and laughter. Faith in fellow men is his wherewithal. Ever growing knowledge culled from the grassroots is his tool. He is the torch-bearer of the new-found freedom, freedom that overtook us in our slumber on the fateful midnight of August 15, 1947—freedom that is yet to reach the far lying countryside. The new Gram Sewak of today has behind him the sanction of the people as a whole and all the institutions the people own and sustain. The Government Departments with their total network of research, extension centres and sub-centres are there behind. His is the role to pool and synthesise the knowledge and service that is or should be behind, so that these could reach the forgotten corners, activate these into hives of new life, and then retransmit life from the grassroots upwards to provide nourishment to the myriads of nerve-cells which are withering above in suspended vacuum.)

India is one. (Gram Sewaks must also be one—an army on the march to a common destination.) The country is a continent. Our number is a fast growing one. Not long hereafter we shall exceed in number the regular army in service. Physical contact among this vast number will remain at best a remote dream. ("Gram Sewak"* has therefore been designed to be the open forum for the soldiers on the firing-line so that in the battle that rages now on the all-India front no one shall march alone.

* "Gram Sewak" a monthly journal for the Gram Sewaks in C.D. Programme.

“Gram Sewak” will provide the common ground for smiles and greetings—fears and misgivings to be exchanged in the open. It is Gram Sewak’s own organ. It is the harbinger of the classless society yet to unravel. Gram Sewak shall write to or for the “Gram Sewak” without fear or favour. “Gram Sewak” should be a mirror of the silent revolution on the march. And let us hear it from the mouth of the man on the ground. It will also do good to others, high up!

To Gram Sewaks

If "Gram Sewak"¹ is to be the mouthpiece of the Gram Sewaks, it is of the first importance that you must begin to think, feel and act fundamentally in respect of your work on the ground. You must send back your impressions without fear or reservations, without ornamentation. This country demands for a decade or more to come, aboriginal energy expressed and exerted in the disciplined aboriginal way. Your Editor, I am afraid, is not doing justice to you either. "Gram Sewak" cannot be produced from within "Dead Walls." Gram Sewaks work in the green countryside with all its filth and wealth side by side. If the "Gram Sewak" is to be real, the Editor and his staff should get their inspiration first. This should be penned in green ink while the sun is rising above the clusters on the yonder horizon, or when the sun is setting behind the multi-coloured clouds. "Gram Sewak" cannot be written or edited as a part of the procedure for disposal of Secretariat files. But how shall we make the poor Editor think on this pattern? You alone can do it, if you will throw up basic challenges.

Here I find that while the vast majority of you are doing a fine piece of work, you concentrate

¹. Name of monthly journal.

by and large on talking about promotions and a few more amenities for yourselves. You should know that promotion for you in your field must come and no one can stop it. You work with farmers. A farmer does not ask for premature fruit out of the orchard which he is planting. In fact, a wise farmer even plucks out fruit that comes in the orchard in a premature way. He knows, if the premature fruit is allowed to grow, the orchard would be weakened for the future. You, I and others are now busy planting an orchard for "Tomorrow." If it is planted well, it must bear fruit. The fruit can belong to no one else but you and others who are investing in it. The old society of parasites who used to ride on others' shoulders, you can see, is dying before our eyes not merely in this country but all over the world. The world of "Tomorrow" will belong to those who work for a living. You ought to know also that the world of "Tomorrow" will endorse the wages that have been earned. Parasite is a vanishing tribe.

Why do we not then talk a little more about how the orchard can be planted; how it can be manured and pruned; how we can weed out the parasites that eat into the soil? Why not talk about success or failure in methods that we try out, so that others can share our thinking and experience? This will enrich the content and the fruit of the programme. Do you have your fortnightly or monthly meetings at Block Headquarters? Do you read the stream of literature which we send out for enrichment of your

knowledge? Do you discuss the contents of this literature with your colleagues, the Block Development Officers and the Extension Officers at Block level when you meet them in your periodical meetings. Can you talk your mind out free from fear or favour, or are you tending to be another Government servant taking orders from above and trying to pass these down? These are questions which are of the greatest importance. It is by thinking and talking on these lines that you will qualify for the dividends you ask and must get. This way alone you can be effective in the work that you do amongst the villagers. My friends, you want strength and a future. This will be determined strictly by what happens to the villagers who are your charge. Are they free from fear? Have they the initiative to forge ahead on their own? Have they the urge to work in cooperation with others?

I will form a Union of you, I guarantee, as we have Unions in all other fields. But this should come when the time is ripe. A Union is like a marriage. Child marriage, as you know, is no longer allowed. It is so, because children never grow if they are married young. Let me assure you, as I close this letter, you have as great a future as any people born on this land. You alone are the architects of your future. The world watches you in action and is eager to help you in your work. It is up to you to rise as high in stature as you can. This you cannot do however for yourself only. It should first happen to the people whom you serve. As they expand, so would you.

To the Extension Officer

While the Gram Sewaks and Block Development Officers constitute the important links in the administrative chain from the State Headquarters down to our village people, you constitute the vital components in the Block team, because on you depends whether our programme will have a technical content in its various facets or it will merely be a chain of administrative exhortations from Government with some grants-in-aid thrown in as doles to our people. By Extension Officers in this context I mean the subject-matter specialists at the Block level in agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, village industries, social education, rural engineering (overseer), public health and work of women and children. Gram Sewak, as you know, has been trained to be a multipurpose functionary. Agriculture being vital industry in India, Gram Sewak has received fairly intensive training in the rudiments of agriculture. In other subjects he has had a training which can be considered a first-aid.

Our villages, and our people living in them, are in deficit today in every single aspect of their life. Financial assistance is no doubt important, considering the general poverty of our village people, but what is infinitely more important is assistance through which they can increase their earnings, stand on their own

feet and be self-reliant as a community. This assistance can come only in the form of improved scientific techniques. Have you ever considered what it is that differentiates our people today from people in other advanced parts of the world? Have you ever considered why it is that we Indians who had the highest technology then known about three hundred years ago should have fallen so low today in every aspect of our life that for almost everything modern we have to depend on other countries in the world? Let me tell you, the soil in India, the climatic conditions in India and the people in India are in no way inferior to those in the most advanced countries in the world. If we have fallen low today it is because we allowed the technology we knew 300 years ago to decay, and we failed to take advantage of the new technology that the industrial age ushered in the West with the advent of steam power. If India is to be brought back to a level with other nations, the only way it can be done is by making redoubled effort in the direction of modern technology in our life and environment.

Eightytwo per cent of our people live in the villages. India cannot progress unless we can make this large mass of our people move forward. It is the realisation of this that is at the back of the Community Development Programme. It is the pressing need for introduction of modern techniques in the specialties which you represent, that motivated the staffing pattern we have today in the Community Development Blocks. It is to this that you owe your existence as an Extension

Officer. We are aware that you have been trained in technical institutions which are manned by staff who have been as inadequately trained as you are. We do not, therefore, expect miracles from you overnight. We do expect, however, that you will keep an open mind, be modest about yourself and will try to learn as much as you possibly can from the so-called uneducated village-folk whom you are out to serve. Remember, it is the illiterate villagers in India who are earning the titles of Krishi Pandits and other awards, by producing more than ten times the average production per acre out of the same soil and under the same climate. Farms maintained by Government have yet not been able to compete with our best cultivators either in output or in the cost of maintenance. You will find that the same holds good in the fields of public health, education, village industries and others where the unlettered farmer's son is giving a performance surpassing by far, the highest of standards yet attained by his educated counterpart.

If I am relating all these examples to you, it is not to put you to shame. I realise, you are not at fault for the bad training you have received. I cannot even blame your teachers. We have all been victims of a sordid past. It will take us a generation or more, before we can correct the situation. I am quoting these examples only to convince you that there is no dearth of techniques or improved knowledge in India if only you will look for it in humility and with modesty. Unfortunately advanced

techniques and knowledge are now confined to a select few. In the atmosphere that prevails, there is no encouragement to the effort on the part of these few to extend their knowledge and techniques to the many around them, which alone could enrich the life of the community. The Gram Sahayak¹ Camps have been the first organised mass effort all over India to correct this situation. The main purpose of these camps is to bring, in the first instance, the progressive farmers of different villages together cutting across their narrow loyalties to their small villages. Such camps will enable you to learn much more on the subject of agriculture and allied fields than you have ever known before and can imagine now. These camps, if properly conducted, will also provide a new dignity to these progressive farmers and encourage them to go ahead and extend their knowledge to others. We propose, if the first set of camps in the field of agriculture prove a success as these must, to extend our field of operation to all other fields under the Community Development Programme.

As Extension Officer your main function, therefore, is to extend what you have learnt and which can be applied on the ground to as large a number of people as you can touch; also to pool the experiences that lie hidden in obscurity in our villages, and extend these to others in the same way. In the process we expect that you will create new comrades from amongst the village people who will be prepared

1. Farm leaders acting as auxiliary Gram Sewaks.

to provide leadership in their respective fields of specialty to their less fortunate counterparts. The Gram Sewak being the last functionary at the village level, we expect you to function through him as your comrade, give him the guidance he needs from day to day. Your position at the Block level as member of the team of equals, over which the Block Development Officer is expected to preside as a captain, will be determined strictly by how you treat the Gram Sewak as your comrade on the ground. If you treat the Gram Sewak as an equal, no power on earth can treat you otherwise. The relationship between you and the Block Development Officer then will become a natural one of comrades working on a common cause. Are you functioning that way? This is the question I wanted to pose to you.

Personnel in the Programme and Training

When we began the programme five years ago, we were faced with a situation where technical representatives of nation-building departments extended at best up to the level of the Tehsil (three or four Blocks). In some States they did not extend beyond the level of the District. In a planned economy for an under-developed and uneducated people such as the vast masses in India represent, it is but natural that initiative for development at least in the early stages will have to rest preponderantly on the Government apparatus. Initiative has little meaning unless it is supported by administrative and financial assistance and technical know-how to an intensive degree. This can only be achieved if developmental apparatus of Government extends nearer to the people. We may compare, for example, the pupil-teacher ratio in a school for efficient instruction. The decision naturally followed that there should be decentralisation of the Government apparatus from the Tehsil to lower levels. The Block with a population of about 66,000 became the unit of choice.

We took the decision to provide at the Block level one representative each of the following departments :— (i) Agriculture, (ii) Animal Husbandry, (iii) Cooperation, (iv) Rural

Engineering (Overseer), (v) Public Health, (vi) Village Industries. One functionary representing a technical department in its totality was not adequate to cover a population of 60 to 70 thousand in a block if a reasonable impact was to be assured. Therefore came the concept of the multi-purpose Village Level Worker, the Gram Sewak, who would have received 'first-aid' training in all aspects of development and who would represent so far as the people are concerned, all aspects of the Government in his dealing with them. | We provided for ten Gram Sewaks in a Block, each catering to a population of six to seven thousand. The Gram Sewak needed regular guidance and technical supervision of his work which it was expected, would be provided by the Block Level Extension Officers. | If the Gram Sewak was to be a multi-purpose representative of all departments of Government, it followed as a logical corollary that we should have an officer at the Block level to provide coordination between the various technical functionaries at that level. Besides providing coordination, this officer would also be expected to look after the general administrative needs of the Block. Technical Officers would then be free from administrative routine, so as to be able to devote themselves fully to the efficient implementation of the programme relating to their respective specialties. We gave him the designation of Block Development Officer.

It was soon realised, however, that even though the Block Development Officer would function as an administrator for the programme

at the Block level, he would need the services of one more specialist for introducing the programme as a whole to the village people in the first instance, after which according to the needs felt by the people, the Extension Officers in the Block could deal more intensively with the subjects indicated. As our programme was designed primarily to build up self-reliance in our people and to enable them to plan and implement their own programme of development, the programme grew naturally to be one of an extension of knowledge to people in different subjects of development. And that way, because we were dealing with adults, the entire programme took the shape primarily as one of Social Education—Social Education relating to all aspects of the life of village people and encompassing necessarily the activities of all nation-building departments. It was obvious that Social Education according to this concept could not be the charge of a single functionary. It was one of the whole team of our Block Officers. Yet, the programme of Social Education demands organised effort, because of its multi-facet character. Normally the Block Development Officer should have been the one to hold it under his charge. But situated as he is, he would have little time available to devote exclusively for this purpose. The need arose necessarily of providing an additional functionary to work as a staff officer attached to the Block Development Officer taking care of this responsibility on his behalf. We called him Social Education Organiser. As we have been working in the Block with men as well as

women, we felt it imperative to provide two Social Education Organisers, one exclusively for the requirements of men and the other for women¹.

The Social Education Organiser cannot function in a vacuum. Extension Officers in other fields have their own institutions or forums through which they can irradiate their specialties namely the agricultural seed farm, agricultural experiment station, demonstration farms and demonstration plots by the Agricultural Extension Officer ; veterinary hospital, poultry farm, key village and artificial insemination centre by the Extension Officer Animal Husbandry ; Cooperatives, seed and implement stores, godowns, etc., by the Cooperative Extension Officer ; hospitals, maternity and child-welfare centres, etc., by the Extension Officer Public Health, and so on. Social Education Organiser could function only if there were institutions such as Information and Community Centre at the Block, village libraries and reading rooms, recreation clubs, study circles, camps and seminars, etc. We, therefore, proposed the creation of these new institutions and activities as physical targets for the Social Education Organisers. It was obvious, however, that these institutions were but means for the propagation of the philosophy, the objectives and the know-how of the Community Development Programme and not as ends in the programme. This was so in the same way as an agricultural

1. This functionary is now known as Mukhya Sewika or Extension Officer for women and children.

demonstration plot, a veterinary centre, a hospital or a maternity centre, a school will be useless unless these grow to be the centres of interest and activity by the village people for whom these are intended.

The next point that we come across in the programme is the mobilisation of people as communities and institutions, which could form the nuclei for progressive growth and permanence under the programme of Community Development. It became necessary, therefore, that this new functionary—the Social Education Organiser, should also act as a specialist at the Block level in methods of group action and group mobilisation. No one functionary in a Block can take upon himself the entire responsibility for group mobilisation of a population of 60 to 70 thousand for himself. Therefore, the Social Education Organiser was expected to work in close collaboration as member of a team with all the other specialists at the Block level (Extension Officers). At the village level he was expected to function with the Gram Sewak as other functionaries do.

In the early stages of the programme it was possible for the Community Projects Administration in the Centre and the Development Commissioner with his staff at the State level to provide virtually day to day guidance to the programme in the field. With the phenomenal expansion that has already taken place and the still faster rate at which we are now expanding, it is no longer possible to provide that degree of close and organised guidance to every Block under

operation. There is need to compensate for this enforced dilution in guidance and supervision by an improvement in the content and quality of the training that we give to our workers. There is need also for special inservice training at frequent intervals. We have also to adopt measures which will ensure that our workers will develop the necessary aptitude and desire for assimilation of knowledge such as we provide through our growing volume of publications from the Centre and States.

Of all the functionaries in our programme the Social Education Organiser has been the most misunderstood and the object of the strongest of controversies. That it is so is but natural in the best of circumstances, especially because of the comprehensive character of the assignment which we have associated with him. Yet, I am not sure that we cannot take measures by which we can define and limit the responsibilities of this functionary within practical proportions and make him substantially more effective in the discharge of his function than he has been heretofore. The Block Development Officer has functioned relatively free from controversies as regards his role in the programme. This is so because his position as an administrator of the programme at the Block level follows conventional patterns. In the discharge of his assignment, however, he has not always been as effective as he should be. It has happened so because he has not imbibed fully an understanding of the philosophy and the objectives of the programme. He has also proved easily susceptible

to the natural gravitation to regulatory methods as against extension approach in regard especially to his colleagues at the Block level. He suffers from the additional handicap that the officers above him are equally unused till now to the team approach that the present times call for.

If we are to find an adequate answer to these problems, it seems essential that our staff in the training centres develop the student's outlook to the programme and team spirit between themselves. The programme is growing. The staff of our training centres should grow equally and remain abreast of the movement. The best of our instructors in the training centres even in an ideal set up would have a tendency to stagnate with the repetitive courses which we are inflicting on them at close intervals throughout the year. We should adopt special measures to counter this trend. I am also not sure that we have not made something of a fetish of the "Job and problem oriented" approach in the pursuit of our curriculum in class-rooms. "Job and problem orientation", if it is to come into the picture at all, should be faced in the actual implementation of the programme in the villages around the training centres. The field problems should be discussed in seminars of trainees which should form an integral feature of the training programme both for Social Education Organisers and Block Development Officers. The teaching of theory in the training centre both for Block Development Officers as well as the Extension Officers should be confined to the maximum extent possible to

the study of the philosophy and objectives of the programme.

If the staff of the training centres are to retain the vitality expected of them and to be in tune with the current development of the programme, it is of the utmost importance that they participate actively in the implementation of the programme of extension in the Block around the training centre. It is also necessary that they participate in study circles along with their trainees on the entire volume of literature issued by the Centre and the States. Furthermore, there should be injection of fresh blood with field experience at periodic intervals. There should also be interchange of staff between various training centres. Simultaneously arrangements should be made for the staff of the training centres to revitalise themselves by close association through study of work in the field in Blocks under current operation some distance away from the direct environment of the training centre. The period of such refresher's training for the staff of the training centres should be long enough to give them the field contact which is vital for their work in the training centre. It is also necessary that the trainees as well as the staff of Training Centres should participate actively in the organisation of village leaders' training camps.

The in-service training for Block Development Officers and Extension Officers at an interval of about three years will have soon to be taken up on an all-India pattern. This in-service training will have to follow more or less the pattern of study circles such as we have for the Central

Institute of Study and Research in Community Development. The logical venue for this will be these training centres. It is clear, therefore, that our training centres which have so far been responsible only for imparting initial training to our workers will soon have to prepare themselves for taking up the fresh task of conducting in-service training for the trainees who return to them after having had some experience in the field. The next stage for these centres will be to take up a certain amount of research work in the field of extension. Our training centres have necessarily to develop themselves with that wider perspective in mind. I do not see how we can prevent stagnation setting in the centres and the instructions they impart to the trainees, unless these training centres grow to be organic units developing their own momentum in tune with the momentum of the programme as a whole.

V

At the Cross Roads

Whose Movement?

This happened years ago. A doctor was giving treatment to a patient with X-radiation. "Are you sure, this will benefit the patient?" I asked, for I was not sure that the treatment was the right one. "If it does not benefit the patient, it certainly will not fail to benefit the doctor" came the instant reply from the doctor. The river Falgu at Gaya is a centre of great attraction. It is said that the offerings to gods at this great place of pilgrimage buy a passage for ancestors straight through the gateway to Heaven. We have been wont to repeat "The days of 'Mantrams' are over. Alladin's Lamp no longer works the miracle in this age of idol-breakers wherein sweat and tears alone count". Yet the other day a child born with four hands and four eyes at Dhuri in Pepsu, is said to have attracted thousands of worshippers and offerings to turn the penurious father into a man of wealth overnight.

Community Project and National Extension Service is fundamentally a movement to awaken the people to an awareness of their obligations in the new free State, and the rights which accrue from the due discharge thereof. Extension can have no other meaning in India, unless we wish to pervert it wittingly or unwittingly to serve our own individual ends. This country along with other like countries in ancient times thrived and

blossomed to great heights of culture and civilisation because our people in those days took to life as an integral whole and practised the great art of co-existence where, to the common pool, each one contributed to one's capacity, from which each one drew according to one's needs. The fact that till today we have not succeeded in discovering the author of the Vedas or the Upanishads, the quintessence of ancient Indian thoughts, is proof positive of the utter absurdity the sages of the past ascribed to being original. "God is truth, the universe is a phantom", they said. From this one original concept rose the whole structure of thought from metaphysics to the physics of day to day existence. The derivation was more or less of the same order as the whole system of modern physics ending in the present splitting of the atom which is based on the concept of an elementary number, "Zero" as we call it.

It will be seen, therefore, that originality is not a common-place and that the discoveries and inventions which we parade around in the Chandni Chowk¹ of life, are at best rumination over thoughts and concepts which are almost as old as man himself. I have taken the liberty of indulging in an elaboration of this thesis because I find that our movement has of late been developing some of the traits of the market-place. The movement was designed to be one exclusively of the people which will be drawn by the people themselves, implemented by the people

¹ Busiest thoroughfare in the old city of Delhi.

themselves and be outgrown by the people themselves. It was to be a renaissance of the movement of man as at the dawn of his appearance, only adjusted to his present environment. Instead of feeling blessed over the thought that Providence has picked us as the tools to conduct this cosmic march, some amongst us have already begun thinking in terms of the stamp that we should put on it as patentees, foolishly oblivious of the fact that the movement had begun long back and that Gurgaon, Martandam, Sriniketan, Baroda, Etawah, Nilokheri, Faridabad each had contributed but a particle to the modern adaptation of a most ancient concept and that not all the "Stamp manufacturers and stamp vendors" combined could add one particle to the original.

If we accept this, we must accept also, as a logical corollary, that there is no short-cut to a people's movement, that slogans in the style of Manu's four Sutras may provide us with momentary amusement but cannot help us to bypass the sweat and tears which alone are the where-withal in our march to the new destination. Looking back at the distance one has already covered, is good at times to bolster one's drooping spirit for the long march yet ahead, but to live in "Yesterday" while marching towards "Tomorrow" is a bad portent. For, it implies either arrival at the stage of retirement or a clever ruse to put others off their track so that one can merrily pick their pockets. "Complacency" has been declared "Enemy Number One" at the present stage of our programme. The word

complacency need not be taken literally, to mean only what follows the "Pot belly". Complacency should also include the prophets who revel in the past with a view to registering their spurious claims on the future. It also includes the authors of fresh "Amritdharas"¹ offering specifics for malignant chronic ailments.

The people's movement sponsored under the community projects will have to maintain strict vigilance against these sleep-walkers and the hath-yogis who are in substance the fossils already of a cold, dead past. The road to the summit is inevitably zigzag. 'Pag-dandis'² are used as short-cuts only for descent, or by questionable characters on questionable pursuits. The unwary millions must be forewarned of the claptraps set by the wily few. The history of India has been one of unbroken continuity in such unholy practices. For once, let us break new grounds. Let the "Tomorrow" we cry to usher in at last be one of, and for, the people.

¹ Ambrosia.

² Short-cuts.

Whose Freedom ?

Emperors came, Emperors went; changing dynasties. They left temples, mosques, mausoleums and durbar halls built not infrequently one over the other. Delhi expanded but not overmuch. So also did the other miniature capitals. The countryside continued green, farmers ploughed the field, tended their cattle, harvested the crops and paid their taxes. The green was left undisturbed, for those who revelled in the capitals had a limited capacity for consumption even including wastage. Arts and crafts thrived because the Maharajahs, the Sultans and their harems vied with past ages for excellence in taste.

The scene changed in the aftermath of the steam-engine. The British needed a dump for their surplus. They also needed native allies to promote the sorry one-way traffic. The green turned grey. The middle class was the first to revolt against the impending threat of extinction. But such revolts are of little avail against the mighty array of guns and cannon. Wider alliance had to be forged if the battle was to be won. The hunchback villager was invited to come in, for he constitutes the bulk of India's citizenship. His stomach was shrunk to the skin. He had but a loin-cloth on. He lived on what little the famished land would yield. He had nothing to

lose. He joined the call when conviction came that he was led by one of his kind. The battle came to a finish ending in the midnight of August 15, 1947. The keys to the granary and to the future were left behind by the departing masters. The leaders who survived the long battle of attrition held the keys in trust. These were to be handed over to the minors on whose behalf these were held. The minors had to be brought to maturity if they were to hold the new charge. They had first to win their freedom from hunger, disease and ignorance.

The fight against an alien enemy is one matter. The fight against enemies at home is something totally different. The latter demands not mere honesty and patriotic fervour in the leadership but administrative and technical excellence and the capacity for sustained drive beyond the shadow of the limelight by hundreds and thousands of workers propelled by a single urge. The denizens that ruled in the structure of Government inherited, whether administrative or technical, were past masters in the art of the pen and paper. This was a legacy with which the leaders in the new Government were to build the "mansions wherein the dumb millions could dwell" as responsive and responsible shareholders in the joint stock enterprise of New India. Between the people and the Government apparatus the only link was that one was the producer and the other was the consumer on short payment. People were browbeaten long enough to be not only subservient to, but to be in mortal dread of, those who signed as "your most obedient servant".

Our people, the Government servants and our political leaders were built of the same clay. There was no prospect that better material could be discovered to man the new apparatus. Besides, in the dark ignorance that prevailed all round, any serious change in the structure of Government would spell upheaval in which anything could happen. True, the British rulers had left, but ghosts were still about in the shape of sinister forces lurking for a chance. The decision was naturally taken, and very wisely too, that the country would move on a continuing foundation. A segment of the apparatus with the most promising of material that could be located was therefore charged with the task of revitalising limited pockets in the countryside by way of a pilot experiment. The idea was that the administrative and technical talents dealing with the rural people would work together on a coordinated pattern, a single impact on the problems that rule on the ground. Life being an indivisible whole the programme necessarily had to encompass in its orbit all activities from agriculture and village industries to problems of recreation and family planning. Simultaneously with the effort for accomplishment of physical targets, the prime objective of the programme was the building of self-reliant communities which could move on their own momentum using the Government apparatus with its resources to the extent required.

The programme which has grown to be a movement has earned wide applause not only at home but also on the wider horizon. Thousands

of visitors from different lands have gone round our villages which are struggling to find their lost place in the map of India. The programme is being emulated in other lands placed likewise. While encomiums have been generous, criticisms have been unsparing too. Reports after reports of the Programme Evaluation Organisation have indicated the gaps and lapses in the programme. No other programme of Government in India has been subjected to such continuous and merciless probe both under Government and non-official initiative. Such evaluation and introspection represent the strength of the programme.

It has been recognised by admirers and critics alike that the concept of the programme as it has evolved in India is something basic and universal in its application. They recognise further that there is no alternative to the programme if the base is to be firm and enduring. The programme has major physical accomplishments to its credit in the form of accelerated activity under agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, village communications, village schools, adult literacy and community centres, public health activities, village industries, rural housing, cooperation, panchayats, in fact all activities that touch on village life. It has been pointed out nevertheless that much more could be achieved if overlapping of Government activities in the areas of operation could be avoided. Success could be even more pronounced if planning had strictly been according to the needs of the people and if people could be more actively

and knowledgeably associated with the implementation of the programme. The strongest criticism levelled against the programme has been its bias in action towards amenities as against production and the lack of collective popular initiative as could be self-sustaining.

The National Development Council which consists of the Central Council of Ministers, the Planning Commission and the Chief Ministers of States appointed a Committee called the Committee on Plan Projects to look into the working of the various key schemes under the Second Five Year Plan with a view to making recommendations for improvement in the pattern of the programme and its efficiency of operation. As the Community Development Programme encompasses the activities of the most vital sector of India, namely the village people, the Committee on Plan Projects assigned the place of honour in its study to the Community Development Programme as the first item in its scheme of investigations. A study team was appointed with Shri Balwantray Mehta, Chairman of the Estimates Committee in Parliament as the Chairman of the Team with a galaxy of talents both non-official and official as Members, to make a detailed study of the programme and make a report. The Study Team has finalised the report. The report has been widely commented upon in the Press. It supports the conclusions of earlier studies undertaken by the Programme Evaluation Organisation albeit in greater details and on a sharper focus. It also makes certain basic recommendations one of which at least is fairly

revolutionary in character. The recommendations of the report can be summed up as follows :

- (1) There are certain practices and procedures evolved through the working of this programme at different Conferences of Development Commissioners which are not being followed rigorously in all States. The report by implication recommends the universal application of those sound practices by all States.
- (2) The Programme has been expanding too fast resulting in dilution in the quality of personnel. In the light of this, the target for coverage of the country as a whole, by end of the Second Five Year Plan is considered undesirable. The coverage should be staggered by another three years.
- (3) Community Development Programme is a continuing programme of development and will demand repetition of the budgetary provision till the present disparities between the urban and the rural areas have been reduced to reasonable proportions.
- (4) If overlapping of Government activities was to be avoided and if popular initiative was to endure on a collective pattern, the essential pre-requisite was the decentralisation of Government activities and the delegation of its powers to statutory institutions of people in the shape of village panchayats, panchayat samitis, and zilla parishads.

- (5) The bias of the programme for amenities will have to shift towards economic activities. If amenities are to develop progressively, production should precede development and not the other way about.

While the other matters related more to the sphere of administrative action which would be considered and acted upon in logical sequence, the last two items required analysis in the public forum, as proper understanding by the people in the country at large was a vital pre-requisite if these recommendations were to be correctly assessed and acted upon.

To take the last item first, the impulse of the village people at the first impact of the programme seems to be to forget for a short spell the drudgery of agricultural activities of the primitive pattern which they have carried on for generations. They wish to forget their hand to mouth existence and the extortions which they have suffered in silence for ages. Rightly or wrongly, they have grown to associate dignity with brick-paved lanes, motorable roads, pucca houses for school buildings, hospitals, and community centres. No wonder therefore that popular demand should be so frantic, as it has been, for these amenities in preference to the vital demands of agriculture. It is also difficult to deny that workers in Government or for that matter anywhere, have a natural preference for items of works which are spectacular in form, which can be easily pointed to as significant accomplishments. Technical Departments in Government

such as Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Public Health have thrived till recently, primarily to benefit the functionaries engaged in these institutions and to serve as show-pieces. They have had little contact with the ground and therefore much less opportunity for the growth of their respective faculties.

In repeated conferences of Development Commissioners followed by Seminars of concerned officers, decisions have been taken to devote the bulk of the effort of the Gram Sewak, the functionary at the village level to increased production in agriculture and allied activities. If the result has not been commensurate with the national emphasis, the remedy obviously lies not merely in reiteration of the shift in emphasis but in timely supplies, credit and technical assistance of the requisite order to serve every family in the village. This demands an enormous expansion in the administrative capacity and the technical content of the departments handling agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, cooperation, and village industries in particular. These facilities by their very nature are slow to grow. Therefore the consummation of an all-out drive in these fields will have to be staggered in the scale of time.

Coming now to the recommendation regarding democratic decentralisation it will be admitted, I presume without dispute, that the vitality of thought and action has so far been on a continuous migration from our villages to the power centres in our urban settlements. If villages are to be made self-reliant, this can only

happen when there is an organic growth of the institutions of village people themselves from the ground upwards. Without these institutions, it is but natural that people will act like a mob, and efforts for regeneration will be spasmodic, with little initiative of an enduring nature to sustain popular enthusiasm. Government organisation by its very mandate is an instrument. An instrument at best can carry out instructions given literally. The instrument can but promote the physical environment. It cannot create the climate. The climate needs a spark which can only be provided by people's own leadership. Leadership from our villages has strayed away for long. Is it any wonder that there should be a tendency for this dark vacuum to be filled in by officials at lower levels of Government ?

The implementation, whatever practical shape it takes, of the Balwantray Mehta Study Team's recommendations will mean abdication of power now exercised by officials and its transference to people's representatives down below. This new leadership, if and when it does spring, is bound to come in clash with many citadels of interest. While the leadership at the National and State levels may be the staunch protagonists for this long overdue devolution of powers to the people, the strongest antagonists to such a devolution will be found in the lower rungs of the official and political ladders. This unholy combination of the patwari¹-cum-circle officer-cum-tehsildar² raj on one side, the absentee

1. Village revenue accountant.

2. Revenue officer at the Tehsil level.

landlord, the money-lender, the shopkeeper and the petty contractor in the middle, and the counterfeit leaders who impose themselves on the people are going to constitute the most formidable of hurdles.

To sum up, the Community Development Programme within a short span has no doubt achieved a distinction for the people of India with its regenerative effort, in the parlour of the world. It has substantial physical accomplishment to its credit. But what is of the utmost significance is the success it has had in high-lighting the conflict inherent in democracy as a concept, if people are to live and let live, as against one section living on another through political or administrative slogans. British imperialism found a fertile ground in India on which it could thrive on token fees to satellites. British rulers are gone, but satellite imperialism which acted as the pillar for British rule has not come down yet. The bulk of the people of India live in rural areas. They have borne the brunt of this imperialism for centuries. If they are to be released from these tentacles, democracy cannot be confined in its operation to our Parliament and State Legislatures alone. Democracy has to travel from the apex to the base. The Community Development Programme seems to have precipitated an issue for which an answer has to be worked out. What turn the Community Development Programme takes next, will determine whether we are working for democracy, or its opposite.

A New Role

At the inception, the role of the Ministry of Community Development was to serve as a "Messenger Boy Organisation", serving as a liaison between Central Ministries on one hand, and the State Development Commissioner's Organisation and the State Government on the other, in furtherance of the policy of Government, namely, "Community Development is the method and Rural Extension the agency to initiate a process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villages". The development block provided the agency through which bulk of the development work under the plans of the Central Ministries and the State Government was intended to be channelised. In this way the Ministry has helped in building up an extension organisation and providing the coordinating machinery for the various Ministries and departments of the Government to use, for implementing the Plan.

On the above role of the Ministry the Committee on Plan Projects Study Team recommended as follows :

"A corollary to the foregoing observations would be that whatever work the Central Government is to perform in the fields of agriculture, social education, health, rural industries, etc., should be performed by the

Ministry concerned and the Community Development Ministry would only coordinate their activities in the block areas. Simultaneously, we are aware that certain aspects of rural development cannot receive adequate attention in the Ministries in which they are at present being dealt with. In particular we mention cooperation and rural self-governing institutions. These two are so closely connected with the programme of community development that we consider that it would be useful if they are brought under one Ministry—the Ministry which deals with the coordination of rural developmental activities all over the country. We have earlier urged that all development work should in future be the primary responsibility of village panchayats and panchayat samitis. We have also stressed the comparative neglect of cooperative organisations and their importance in the field of rural production. Bringing these two subjects at the policy-making level under one common Ministry also empowered to coordinate rural development activities would, in our opinion, ensure more effective work at the Centre and in the States”.

In pursuance of the above recommendations work relating to the two basic institutions namely, panchayats and cooperatives has already been transferred to this Ministry. There is also the realisation both in the Ministry as also in the States that a programme sponsored, directed and dominated by the Government agency has

no chance either of involving the people as a whole or of meeting their fast growing requirements. If the programme is to grow and endure, there must be democratic growth at the village and block levels, and the initiative for planning and implementation must shift on to the people, the Government agency serving as instrument of the people. The main emphasis in the Ministry will therefore necessarily be on the build-up of the people's institutions such as the panchayats, the cooperatives and the other "associate" organisations, and their higher echelons at block and district levels. The build-up will necessarily have to be accompanied or preceded by training of the people, their representatives as also the Government servants all along the line for the new attitude and work expected of them apart from their usual training in subject-matter and the philosophy of programme. All other activities in the Ministry must be so designed as to be subservient and conducive to the development of the community and the community organisations implied above.

As a corollary the role of the technical advisers in the Ministry will primarily be :

1. To draw up an extension programme which can be implemented by people's organisation in Community Development Blocks based predominantly on people's own labour and the nucleus funds which we have in the C.D. budget practically in every field, and to supervise the implementation in the field.

2. To help Central Ministries promote research in the problems encountered in the

field, and to help extend the results of research to the field.

3. By way of sample study, to discover difficulties and problems faced by people's organisations in the implementation of programmes and to reflect these to the Ministries concerned with a view to help mould central policies so as to make these more conducive to the people's requirements.

4. To influence the formulation of the approach to the Third Five Year Plan so that there would be an assurance of a minimum level of development throughout the country, and that the States' programmes will be built upto the maximum extent possible in terms of the blocks ; also to be in continuous contact with the Ministries concerned with a view to assisting them in the initiation and formulation of the Ministries' programme in their respective fields.

It will also be the function of the Ministry :

1. To help supervision by the appropriate Ministry in the Centre of its substantive programmes in the States ;

2. To facilitate the block being treated by the department concerned in the States as a unit for planning and development ;

3. To formulate through the Central Institute of Study and Research a programme of training of high level officers and non-officials, and also to promote research methodology in association with the Universities, State Governments, our Training Centres, and other institutions.

It is further recognised that the people's

organisations, the main assignment of this Ministry, cannot grow to their full stature except through the day to day experience of the implementation of the programmes which they can carry out on their own with technical guidance from the block staff and a modicum of financial assistance such as the C. D. budget already provides. By functioning in this manner, the Community Development Organisation should, besides promoting the growth of basic rural institutions, be in a position to reflect the will and problems of the people in respect of the whole gamut of rural development.

VI

Functional Democracy

Our Socialist Pattern

“A world completely at peace with itself is a dead world.” This is how our Prime Minister described his understanding of the world a long time ago. The implications of this have been peeping in my mind from time to time. I am happy to discover that perfection is a myth and the bulk of the people will always be of a neutral will. They will be sandwiched between a minority of fundamentally good people and a minority of fundamentally bad people. These two blocks represent in depth and intensity the two extremes in eternal pull against each other on which life will depend for its flow as against coma. The administration of the affairs of life necessarily has to be so designed as not to interfere with this cross-current, yet to ensure self-regulatory conditions contributing to the direction of life. If this interpretation be correct, our socialist pattern of society must needs steer clear as much of the ideal village of “Ram Raj” dreamt of by many, as of the ideal “State Raj” on the anvil in countries around, which many in India long for fervently.

This means that in our socialist pattern of society we must plan for the widest participation of people in the affairs of life, and the patterns must be competitive as also complementary. There must be room in every sphere for activities

to be conducted broadly under the four following heads :

- (1) Public
- (2) Collaborative
- (3) Cooperative
- (4) Individual

The public activities will necessarily be sponsored by the Government representing the collectivity of the people. Collaborative activities will be those sponsored by groups of individuals for altruism or for profit. Cooperative activities will be those conducted for service to, and benefit of, the large sections of people in society who lack individually the resources to work by themselves. Individual activities will be those relating to one's own life or to others' based on altruism, survival or profit. If we are to be a Socialist Society it looks imperative that we should provide scope for the growth and interplay of these four sectors. We should ensure that none develops into a monopoly. Social forces should find their expression through the Legislatures in a balanced way based on co-existence without one sector nagging at, or trying to dominate, the other. If we accept this thesis, it should work out its logic in all the primary sectors of our life. Our Socialist Pattern should then develop as follows :

There will be a public sector in large State undertakings covering all strategic points which if left loose will expose the State to ransom by vested interests in industries. There will be collaborative private enterprises in undertakings of non-strategic nature. Artisans will be organised progressively in cooperatives connected with

small and cottage industries as well as village crafts. The large number of middle-class entrepreneurs will engage in Individual small-scale industries primarily confined to consumer goods. There will be no monopoly, even a State one, except in defence industries. The same pattern will apply even to agriculture, the primary sector of our economy. There will, for instance, be large State farms serving as models to others, also as training grounds. There will be private farms based on knowledge, enterprise and other resources. There will be cooperative joint farming by small farmers on very wide scale. There will be individual entrepreneur farming based on special skill, initiative and inclination.

Education in the country whether in the Arts, Humanities, Science or technical subjects, will move on the same pattern. Higher education, especially in science and technical subjects, will necessarily be confined to the Government. The rest will be dispersed as widely as possible between local Government institutions, trusts, cooperatives, local bodies and private agencies. There has been a trend in recent years of the Government sector expanding far enough to grab even primary education in villages, not to speak of Universities which Government have been trying to control throughout. There has also been overdoing of rank in Government where even a Vice-Chancellor of a University is made to feel small in the order of precedence. All this threatens to denude independent autonomous institutions like Universities of their

talents which are being progressively attracted to pigeonholes in Government, leaving mediocre talents behind, which are frittered in internecine battles. These trends will have to be reversed with a firm determination.

Research, pure and applied, will follow the same pattern. Research of a basic type which calls for long-term investment and can hardly be expected to pay a dividend in the short-run, will be confined to the public sector and be under the control of Government. Such research should be conducted in Government institutions, Universities and private institutions. Research of an applied kind meant for immediate applications should be run by Government including Local Self-Government institutions, collaborative and cooperative agencies, as also individual private agencies with adequate grant-in-aid from Government. In the field of agriculture and industries, and other fields such as public health and education there should be the widest dispersal of research with a view to promoting competition and quick action. The increasing monopoly which the Government is tending to acquire on research confined to Government servants eager more for their ranks in hierarchy by and large than other considerations, is a self-defeating process. The law of diminishing return is already in action.

Responsibilities for extension of higher knowledge, techniques and facilities whether in the field of primary production or of welfare activities are confined today almost exclusively to the Government. Nothing could be more

ruinous in the long-term perspective. Extension must be vested equally in the Collaborative, Cooperative and Private sectors dispersed evenly according to proximity of interests and supported by adequate grants-in-aid by Government. Equal income for all is not good even as a theory, much less so in practice. Variations in the pressure and temperature of air account for healthy breath and the cycle of seasons. Earth is balanced with its undulations of heights and depths. Problem arises only when the gap between the heights and the depths grows too wide. Nature has her way of taking care of it through earthquakes. Man has done it throughout history by revolutions. We are anxious to avoid the rigours and atrocities of a revolution in India. We should then develop through universal social education the sanctions of the people such as can make possible the enactment and implementation of adequate legislation to reduce the gap between heights of affluence and depths of wants. We must also provide for a self-regulated mobility of relative prosperity and poverty. Thus alone can we avert earth-shaking revolutions as have overtaken other countries.

Social education for the people can be conducted wisely by Government on the one hand and by the interplay of political parties on the other. A wise Government can then enact effective and just legislation providing for reasonable variations in the income between individuals. It can absorb the excess as income for the State and invest it to wipe out the deficit

below the marginal line by employment in public works and other phases of development ensuring the minimum level of living for a citizen willing to work for a living. This is not difficult to achieve if there is clarity of thinking, singleness of purpose and honesty of conviction. It is high time an attempt be made to give an outline of the socialist pattern of society we are pledged to build in India. This will help clear up people's minds and also of those in charge of policies. If we are to avoid the monolithic structure of totalitarian countries, we should make a determined bid to see that the public agency grows as a part of a balanced pattern and that the other agencies, namely the Collaborative, Cooperative and the Individual, also are promoted alongside in pre-determined proportions. We cannot leave this growth laissez faire, if we are to avoid the reaction to a reaction. The vagueness helps only the corrupt public servant, the corrupt politician and the corrupt entrepreneur. We can see this happening already, and not on a very small scale.

Large scale corporations whether private or public have a good deal in common so far as the character of management is concerned. However, in the situation of India, it is elementary common sense that the Public sector should run large corporations dealing with basic industries. Public servants who can function with drive and efficiency far off from the vigilant supervision of the Legislatures, the press and the public are strictly limited in number and will continue to be so for a long time to come. A

large scale expansion in the public sector in a promiscuous way to cover all and sundry activities meantime, may help add to the rarity value of a public servant but it does not add to efficiency or honesty. If experiences are any guide, the risks involved are too costly, too alarming.

The next point that needs be remembered is that the Government may be run by a political party elected by the people but the programme of Government is a national one in which all parties should have even scope to compete, especially in the formative stage of development through which we are passing today as a nation. The tacit effort to administer the programme of national reconstruction through the monopoly of a Government agency which appears malleable in the short run, can lead but to a formidable combination of the most reactionary elements both in Government and the people. The danger is especially real at levels nearer the ground where the corrective hand of the State Legislature is a far cry. The absence of outlet for expression is the root cause for most social maladjustments. The present turmoils in the country between the various sectors of people, the political parties and within the ranks of party are confirmations as also unhappy portents.

Thoughts on the Second Front

A few want to rule over many or one nation over another because there is economic or political advantage to be gained—"something for nothing." This, however, cannot happen, unless a significant section of the "ruled" make common cause with the "rulers," in the spoils. The unnatural traffic can be maintained only so long as the "ruled" are kept ignorant of their rights as free citizens and of the obligations which they should discharge in exercise of their freedom. It is in the natural interest of unnatural "rulers" to keep the "ruled" in ignorance. Democracy in practice is an ever receding goal just as honesty is an ever relative virtue. The struggle between the forces of freedom and of bondage is life. The absence of it is stagnation. The world of man is yet in its infancy—a stage of evolution. It will continue so for millennia to come. The many in bondage cannot exert for the freedom from shackles unless they are guided and led under tender care by leaders who have themselves outgrown the bondage of the mind, who are struggling to shake off the bondage of the body also. Darkness and stagnation rule only when such leaders of thought and action are missing, and even the sub-conscious urge for freedom is not there in those ruled.

Leadership did grow in India of an

unprecedented magnitude with hardly a parallel in world history. The urge for freedom from foreign rule also did work a ferment in the subconscious mind of the people. Thus was it possible to wage the war of Independence. The aftermath of 1918, and more especially of 1945, let loose certain world forces. These gave our struggle a further boost. We grew into a formidable force. Independence came; but, alas, the battle of freedom by the masses came to a halt and appeared almost bypassed. The spirit of liberation in the wake of Independence affected but a relative few. They got involved instantly in the administration of a nascent state and repairing the wreckage wrought over centuries of alien domination. They were left with little time to provide that tender care to the saplings on the ground. Nature abhors a vacuum. It could not but be filled also by reactionaries from the subterranean sections of the society. A settled democracy depends on the co-existence of a constructive democratic opposition; the opposition stands as a check on governmental excesses and lapses. But healthy opposition needs time to grow. We have inherited communalism, linguism, casteism and feudalism as national legacy. From a churning of these seem to spring the forces that are inter-playing. The alien power is gone. What can produce now the motive power for rallying the forces of progress which will educate the masses who now hibernate in the darkness of reaction and stagnation that rule below? The Community Development Programme came to carry the

charter of freedom to this vacuum to enlist every forgotten family as a shareholder in the joint stock enterprise of free India. The message and call could not be carried with an empty hand to men, women and children starved in body and spirit over centuries. Funds and technical assistance had to be provided despite other competing calls. The programme could only be initiated through a section of the Government agency specially consecrated to the new mission.

No people in the world have indulged more in the polemics of what is good and what is bad, of the potential divinity of the human personality. Our history confirms that these polemics led but to the starvation of the soul and body both. Only a few thrived as pirates and parasites. In our new approach to the people we chose, therefore, to talk through deeds rather than words. The people in the countryside still remained integrated personalities despite their miseries, physical and mental. An integrated approach alone could make an emotional impact on them. The physical aspects of the programme were there although ostensibly to bring about a physical improvement in the environment. The deeper purpose was that these would serve as the means to regenerate the dormant spirit and potential of the people. The programme had perforce to start as a programme of Government, with people participating in it.

Seven years of concentrated action on a national front may appear short against the perspective of history. But it is long enough to serve as pointers to the direction we should

travel if we are to reach the destination for which we started. From knowledgeable visitors from foreign land and those from our own, from reports of the Programme Evaluation Organisation and of other Committees, from individual and team visits by us, we gather certain common trends which, it is time we analyse with objectivity. We discover that while there is substantial physical accomplishment to our credit, also substantial enthusiasm and participation by the people, we have hardly touched the fringe of self-reliance such as could manifest itself in the growing institutions of the people. On the food front, our activities have extended hardly to about 20 per cent of the entire agricultural population in the areas under current operation. Yet our levels of production in India have been so miserably low that it could have been the easiest thing to bring about a sharp dividend in every field under the plough. True, we have freed the village people of their fears of Government; we certainly have generated hopes; we also have demonstrated what the people can do if they unite. But we have not taken full advantage of all this enthusiasm to build up enduring initiative. The 20 per cent or odd of agriculturists that we have so far touched are the relatively better off sections of the village community. They would have tried to derive benefit from Government anyhow. May be, we have given them help in an organised way and thus eased their burden.

The problem of food production in India for a fast growing population however does not get solved by concentration on a select few cultivators.

Bulk increase can be effected by bulk extension alone of improved practices. We have unfortunately not solved, not even precipitated sharply enough, the contradictions between the "few" large holders of lands and the "many" small holders which arise out of the fact that a large holding can pay only on cheap labour. And labour cannot be cheap if the bulk of the small holders take to improved and intensive methods of cultivation. We have hardly touched the life of the landless population. We could provide them some substantial means of livelihood through poultry, fishery, and small crafts, but these mean effort on a bulk scale. We have either not had the resources in manpower to tackle these programmes effectively or we have bypassed this in our misplaced zeal for the spectacular.

We know we have only one Extension Officer, at best half-baked, to take care of a population ranging from 60,000 to 1,00,000 in a block. We have one Gram Sewak for about 1,500 families. We cannot blame them if they concentrate on the few who are on the upper strata of the village society and who offer ready acceptance of the aid and practices we can provide. By no stretch of imagination can the best Gram Sewak by himself tackle more than 100 to 150 families. The spontaneous reaction in the Government organisation will then be to multiply functionaries. We cannot do this because, firstly, we do not have the resources to pay for the additional personnel; secondly, we do not have adequate facilities for training even according to

the present pattern of staffing; thirdly, larger staff at the ground level means corresponding increase in supervisory personnel. This we cannot provide, for experience can grow only in the field and that too over years. There is no shortcut to supervisory experience. Multiplication of personnel can thus mean but further addition to the confusion that already threatens. Fourthly, and by far the most important, galaxies of Government functionaries if they are efficient, and they must be to be effective, are apt to contribute further to the curbing of the naive initiative of our people. What is then the answer ?

It would seem that instinctively we had anticipated the problem. We also went about working out the answer. We initiated a year ago the training of Gram Sahayaks. We have planned to have about 25 Gram Sahayaks in every village between the five groups of subjects. The first group of agricultural Gram Sahayaks is being forged into shape for the past one year. But they are still hanging loose because they are attached neither to an institution on the ground nor to one above from which they could draw their day to day nourishment. We decided at Mount Abu to link the Gram Sahayaks as co-opted members of sub-committees in the village panchayats. We expected higher organised guidance for them from corresponding sub-committees of the Block Development Committees. It is clear, however, that if these functional sub-committees are to be effective, the principal organisations to which they will be

attached must have a clear understanding of their own role vis-a-vis these new bodies. We decided that the Block Advisory Committees should be redesignated as Block Development Committees. We wanted these Block Development Committees to function as the transition to the Statutory Block Panchayat Samitis recommended by the Balwantray Study Team and accepted in principle by most States in India.

But here again, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride." Administrative mandates can hardly be substitutes for concrete action in a live programme. We came inevitably to the necessity of providing adequate training to members of the panchayat including the Panchayat President, to members of the executives of village cooperatives, and to members of the Block Development Committees.

The Ministry of Community Development have been charged with the responsibility of "Panchayats" as a primary subject. The Ministry is already working on programmes of training for Panchayat Secretaries and Panches. The All India Cooperative Union and the Reserve Bank of India are conducting training for executive and secretarial workers in the cooperative movement as also for the members of the executives of cooperative organisations. The training for these workers will have to be conducted both in institutions and camps, perhaps the latter following the former, and it will have to be based on joint efforts of officials and non-officials. Ministry of Community Development

will have to ensure that the curriculum of training for all these workers includes the treatment of community development in its various phases and that the trainers on the subjects have also received adequate orientation.

We come next to the most important group of people whose training has so far been neglected and which must be taken up forthwith if the programme is not to proceed further in the direction of the stagnation that has already begun to creep in. They are the members of the Block Development Committees who, according to the decisions at Mount Abu, should play the interim role of the Block Panchayat Samitis and establish conventions as prelude to the statute. While the training of Panches, Gram Sahayaks and members of the executive of cooperatives may be safely entrusted upto an extent, to the block organisation, the training of the Block Development Committee members cannot be left to them. There is no precedent in world history where a paid guardian has trained his ward to be his master. We should not ask for the super-human from the all too human block personnel. We could, perhaps, have left this training in charge of district officers. Unfortunately, district officers including Collectors are not proving equal even to the load of the limited administrative guidance the programme calls for. To entrust the programme of the training of Block Development Committee members to these officials can, therefore, end only in a ritual for no fault of any one. Ritual is something which we must avoid like the plague. The Government

organisation is already riddled to the brim with it. How do we solve it then?

The Ministry of Community Development, it appears from all counts, will have to work out a composite answer. The Ministry have to make use of its own institutions, the Government agencies and of all other agencies and institutions of people. We should use for instance the Rural Institutes set up by the Ministry of Education as can equip themselves for this task. We should explore other purely non-official or aided institutions in the country. We should use voluntary organisations such as the Sarva Seva Sangh, Bharat Sewak Samaj, All India Cooperative Union, the recently started Indian Panchayat Union, Kasturba Trust, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Adimjati Seva Sangh, Servants of India Society, Depressed and Backward Classes organisation, to name a few, wherever we can locate them. For obvious reasons, none of these organisations alone, will be able to handle the programme on the all-India front. Therefore, agencies and organisations will be used only in areas where they have facilities for training to our satisfaction, and organisations which will be prepared to send their key personnel to central camps for the training of trainers organised directly by the Ministry of Community Development. We should also seek the services of our friends, the M.P.'s and M.L.As. who will be prepared to join in the programme. They can do so effectively only if they in turn are prepared to undergo an orientation in the basic curriculum indicated earlier by self and mutual education in camps and study circles.

We are placing a high emphasis on joint collaboration between officials and non-officials in the training of project personnel. This will apply with even greater emphasis to the training of non-officials. Officials in a democracy are guaranteed a secure and substantial tenure independent of the vagaries of political weather. This is so in order to enable them to function as the steel frame with an independent mind such as can provide stability to administration. But the steel frame is a dead structure unless it is impacted upon by a "will" from a growing and periodically rejuvenated procession of people's representatives. The representatives have to reflect the pulse of the people. They have to guide the steel-frame in implementing their wishes. They have to inspire the people's collaboration in all such plans. In a democracy the steel-frame is the instrument of action, to which the people's representatives will impart the urge, and motive power. The blending of the two will pilot the movement in the direction of the people. To a country budding in democracy, the interplay of these two elements in mutual trust and dependence is an even greater "must."

In the implementation of the Community Development Programme, we must confess, to be honest, we have dealt so far with project personnel on the one hand and the people on the other. We seem to have left the middle link, the people's representatives to fend for themselves scrupulously alone. This has been the greatest disability imposed on the programme, perhaps unwittingly.

This must now be made up as top priority. We must remember, an extra efficient Government organisation for an extra under-developed people are contradictions in terms if democratic growth is the objective. We might have done some injury already by exclusive emphasis on the training of Government functionaries and by ritualistic attention if at all to non-official representatives of people. But the injury has yet not gone too deep for remedy. We must wake up and begin making amends.

In his message to the Mount Abu Conference, Prime Minister mentioned that the Community Development Programme has arrived at a crucial stage. I had elaborated this further by mentioning that the programme is going through the transition of adolescence and that the programme's future shall be determined from there on by the care and attention that we could apply to this critical stage of transition. The Government organisation has by all counts come to the end of its tether in its present strength and on its present pattern of operation. The "First Official Front" which we brought into being on October 2, 1952, has given, let us be fair to ourselves, an outstanding account of itself. Let us not overrate its strength. Let us not subject it to further heart trouble by straining it beyond its recognised resilience.

The Second Front is an inevitable "must". For, the strain which is already corroding the many who have been possessed by the programme, has to be eased. The programme has to involve the people for whom this was meant. The

Government worker on the ground is too far off from legislative protection to sustain his morale by himself. Let us beware that the programme does not lead to an unholy combination between them and the power centres in villages. Let us make sure that the programme will ease the stranglehold on those who are already ground under laws and administrative procedures heavily weighted against them. We must not be an unwitting party to a further consolidation of the laws of the jungle. If we do not work for liberation, we may help incarceration. But that way lies stark totalitarianism which none of us can escape in the end. We should read the signs on the horizon already. Wisdom and alertness of a people lie in their capacity for vigilance and action at the first unfamiliar noise past midnight. Those of us who have ears should prick them for the whispers round the corner.

Functional Democracy

If you ask a citizen of U.S.A. who he is, like a flash comes the answer that he is an American. If he mentions the State from which he hails, he will do so only as a second thought. An Indian, on the other hand, would like to introduce himself first as a Bengalee, Madrasee, Punjabee or a Maharashtrian. For him Indian citizenship is a second thought rather than the first pride. The fact that the Americans speak a common language and have developed opportunities with a variety of choice for education and employment practically without limits throughout the United States helps the promotion of the feeling of common citizenship across the barriers of local geography and the multiplicity of races that dwell therein. India, on the other hand, takes pride in the diversity of her languages and culture, her geography and climatic conditions, the galaxy of races and religions that stalk her soil.

The culture pattern that at one time was the richest heritage of India and held the people together, providing an undercurrent of unity and stability despite all the invasions into her territory and the incursions into her social life, is being threatened today. Partly so, because life in India is moving fast from its pastoral simplicity to the conflicts and complexities of the industrial

age. Partly also because, our situation has grown immeasurably worse with the enormous change in the "Land to man ratio" that the country has gone through during recent centuries. The population having increased to staggering proportions, the old simplicity of life is now a part of the saga of the past and 'Ram Raj' at best a fairy tale. With land no longer able to support the population on the standards demanded by modern times, India needs rapid industrial development. It needs no proving that a large scale expansion in this sector alone can provide for a tolerable standard of living and sufficient employment for the colossal mass of our unskilled and semi-skilled population. This expansion cannot take place unless the means of production and the initial running capital for large scale industrial enterprises can first be created either from surplus at home or on long-term loan from abroad.

Such an indigenous surplus is hardly practical in the present circumstances of our economy and the rate of population growth. Large scale import of capital assets on long-term loan does not look easy either. For, the countries which advanced through industrial development riding primarily on the back of the natives of the under-developed areas have still not learnt their lessons. They are yet to realise that the antidote to totalitarian trends in the under-developed world lies not in increased military aid or in the intensification of cold war potentialities within these regions, but in developmental assistance by way of higher techniques and finance. Thus alone can there

be a rapid growth of industrial potential with associated tertiary development such as can provide for large scale employment of labour as also of the middle class intelligentsia who have to be rescued from their present parasitic interests on land. The understanding that a fast moving revolution cannot be averted otherwise is yet to sink in those who hug on to the illusion of their security based on the monopoly of resources and the stockpile of arms.

In totalitarian countries, be they of one extreme or the other or of the multiplicity of patterns in between, it is possible for the Government in power to force a sharp tightening of the belt. There, the voice of the people has been muzzled and the bayonet is ready at hand to go into action at the first appearance of even a ripple. Such Governments can build up the surplus for industrial growth as indeed they already have demonstrated in various parts of the world for the past 30 years and continue to do even now. The process involves in the short run, formidable cost in lives, prolonged miseries and privations for the many who survive the process of building for the morrow. Besides, what happens in such countries in the long run to the spirit of man which has been apparently well crushed both in the individual as also in the community, is something yet to be seen. The new trends are too young to carry conviction as to whether force and hatred as "Means" can lead to love and good-neighbourliness as an "End". If human history is any guide and philosophy has any value or significance, we can be fairly certain that

darkness cannot generate light, nor hatred generate love. Light alone can beget light and love alone can beget love. India has accepted the goal of socialism through democracy. She will be totally untrue to all that she has stood for, if she were to follow a different course.

India awoke to her independence on the trail of a cataclysm just ended and into a world in turmoil as the direct aftermath. By temperament and tradition, Indians are believers. For the people, Mahatma Gandhi constituted a symbol which they could believe without questioning. Those who joined the Mahatma in the prolonged battle for Independence had the direct baptism at his hands and underwent transformation as the Master willed. The large masses of the people stood by the Mahatma in the movement he launched. But the questioning faculty in them did not have the chance to grow; nor had there been time or opportunities for an organised system of education of the people in the new values of liberty, fraternity and equality which the Mahatma had placed before the Nation.

When Independence came it was but inevitable that powers taken over from the withdrawing alien rulers should vest in a relatively limited number of people who had fought the battle by the side of the Mahatma. By and large, they had to man the Parliament and the State Legislature which the Constitution brought into being. The Constitution has been in action for about a decade. The nascent democracy in India has given an outstanding account of itself despite all

our recognised failings. The fact remains nevertheless that below the State Headquarters, the countryside is yet to wake up to the full implications of her freedom. The countryside continues still to be ruled by officials far removed from the eyes of the Legislature and far too independent of the will and wishes of the people. This is a dangerous portent for the present, much more so for the future.

Democracy to survive and endure as a reality has to be worked by the perennially rejuvenated impacts of representatives emerging from below who will reflect the surging spirit of the people. This was possible in the past because there was a fight from the ground upwards against an alien ruler, and people could be measured in their representative capacity by the records of their struggle or by other criteria which could more or less, be non-controversial. With alien rule no more on the scene, and the past generation of leadership a declining factor on the time scale, old standards no longer obtain. New standards have perforce to be evolved if the people are to choose their representatives in the future wisely. When we consider next as to how we can stimulate best the surplus resources from the people and the optimum utilisation of these in their service, we find that "No taxation, if no representation" is the principle that governs the factor almost with a vengeance. Unless the people can grow to be the masters of their own destiny, the Government cannot evoke the best out of them. Indeed, it grows even difficult to prevent people from abusing amenities created by Government

on their behalf and at their expense.

The Community Development Programme came to the scene early 1952 in quest of a way out of the impasse. In the words of the Prime Minister, who bequeathed the programme to the nation, it was to transform the people of India "Into builders of themselves and so of India". The programme perforce had to start as a cavalcade of officials doling out small mercies in kind, money and materials to the masses of our village people. But after seven years of organic growth with all the inevitable ups and downs, aspirations and fears, actions and restraints, the programme at last is tending to acquire the shape of a new movement. The movement is about to turn a crucial corner. A constitutional movement of the people from the ground upwards is under evolution. It seeks expression in its own institutions at all levels using the Government agency as comrade-in-arms. Democratisation, Delegation and Devolution of authority to Block Panchayat Samiti and District Panchayat Parishad are now being worked out as inexorable logic virtually in all States. Some States are going fast; some moving cautiously and slowly. But the movement is there universally, inescapably.

The triple process of Devolution, Delegation and Democratisation taking place in the field will soon assume the force of an avalanche. For, this is bound to give back to the mute the voice missing now for centuries. A voice minus a mature mind is a danger to democracy. Before the titanic force is unleashed, it behoves a

wise Government to do some introspection as to the dangers and pitfalls involved and the way out to a new synthesis.

One school of thought in the country proclaims that democracy is a luxury for an underdeveloped country such as ours ; we should have "Controlled Democracy" of the sort that is emerging in an increasing number of countries around us. Curiously enough, this theory is advocated by the reactionary communalist-cum-capitalist-cum-feudalist-cum-parochialists and the so-called progressive fire-eaters alike. While this is a fairly recognised feature of thinking in two sections of our country, a third section is growing equally vocal in favour of what they call a "Partyless Democracy." As far as one can understand in the absence of definite documents on the subject, this is supposed to be the utopia where there will be no elections ; villagers will live in the glorious isolation of self-sufficiency as in the days of the old. They will elect the Government of their little republics by a mere show of hands in unanimity or near unanimity as the criterion for the leaders elected. The Parliament and Legislatures, it is inferred by implication, will vanish lock, stock and barrel. And if they are to be there, they will have representatives indirectly elected by the ground republics based again, we presume, on unanimity or near unanimity.

Our acquaintance with "Controlled Democracy" is sufficiently deep to steer us fairly clear of any desire to travel in that direction. If India deserves to survive, she can only do so on the merit of her being able to build up a Government

of the people based on democracy unadulterated. In such a democracy, man must have the "Right to live", the "Right to work for a living" and the "Right to receive what is earned". The issue is clear. This cannot be secured under "Controlled Democracy".

The other picture however is innocuous looking enough to catch us unawares. Let us, therefore, analyse it a little further. A self-sufficient village republic even regionally, is a myth in the sputnik age where the world has already shrunk to the virtual size of a peanut and life is springing forward for a leap into the wider cosmos. Wider horizon apart, even in terms of elementary facilities such as airways, railways, telegraphs, telephones and radio communications, the revolution already under way in the means and processes of production makes it quite obvious that self-sufficient village republic can at best be a dream.

Heat and cold, light and darkness, saint and devil are opposites which make for life and its continuance. A self-sufficient village republic consisting of God-fearing people, thinking, believing and acting all alike, is a village dead before it is born. Life cannot spring from such an inanition. Democracy demands ideology and ideals in a perpetual but healthy clash. Only dead people do not compete. Competition which can lead to emulation is the spice of life. A living society must be prepared to harbour all from the saint to the devil with all the ramifications in between. The only safeguard needed is an air and atmosphere which will discourage corrupt practices in the battle for life whether of the

individual or of the community. If our democracy is to be for living men and of enduring and organic growth, we must see, it has roots in the ground, that its trunk, branches and leaves can get free air, water and sun. How to work this out, is the question of the hour.

We have agreed that at the village, there will be the Panchayat as the basic institution. Panches will be elected by the people on adult franchise. Election can be on secret or open ballot. There is hardly a warrant for rigidity on one pattern or the other. But Panches, as we know, do not involve the whole village except on special occasions, may be once or twice a year if at all. Democracy we aim at, has to develop from a code of conduct to a way of life for every citizen. It must also not ignore the basic fact that the same ego in man is at work whether in the enlightened self-interest of the godly man or the mean selfishness of the evil doer. How do we provide for its expression or motivation? How, on the other hand, do we make sure that the present caste, religion, race, land and other vested interests in the village will not find their competitive and mutually exploitative expressions in the basic institution of Panchayat? We recognise that competition based on honest practices is a feature which is indispensable if life is to be moving and dynamic. We recognise also that the present trends are often self-destructive. What alternative expression do we provide to the competitive instinct in man and how do we harness it to the service of the community? There being no room for vacuum except in death, we

must provide creative outlet for life's multitudinous achings for expression.

(The Community Development Programme visualises competing yet complementary functional organisations at the village to provide this very outlet. Every village can have for instance a number of functional organisations which for the purposes of Community Development Programme are called Associate Organisations. Associate Organisations can be the Mahila Mandal, the Bal Mandal, the Yuvak Mandal, the Dastkar Mandal¹ and the multiplicity of other organisations that can be created as single or multiple village organisations according to the circumstances prevailing. All activities in the village from administration, village planning to those like drama, music, sports and other recreational programmes, pursuit of literature, poetry, bhajans, kirtans, etc., can all be encompassed by these organisations. We have agreed to panchayat being the basic institution at the village because it has its roots in our culture and tradition. The other basic institution should be the village cooperative. The cooperative can be designed to provide the organisational, financial and technical guidance for the development of village economy consistent with growing modern technology. The cooperative can have its own sub-organisations or special unions like those of weavers, artisans, transport and building workers, brick makers, cooperative farmers, etc.

The panchayats in the villages will have

1. Women, children, youth and workmen's clubs.

functional sub-committees dealing with every subject of village development from children's activities to health, sanitation and village administration. The Associate Organisations will be fully drawn upon for the membership of the functional sub-committees. One or two members of the panchayats will head the individual sub-committees according to their qualifications and inclinations. Thus, the village panchayat will function more as a cabinet with both collective and individual responsibility. The adult population of the village will constitute the Parliament, and the functional sub-committees will be the equivalent of the standing committees or the consultative committees which are coming in increasing vogue in the Parliament as also in the State Legislature. The cooperatives and the panchayats with their Associates will provide active expression to a vast number of people in the villages who are too reticent to fight an election, and yet have substantial contributions to make to the programme of village development and village democracy.

At the Block level we visualise a Block Panchayat Samiti for the panchayats and a Block Supervisory Union for the cooperatives. We visualise similar apex institutions for these at the District level. We can consider functional sub-committees of the Block Panchayat Samiti or the Zilla Parishad exactly on the same pattern. The functional Associate Organisations at the village level can form similar unions at Block and District levels. When the time is ripe, these District organisations can have their apex organisations at the

State level and the State apex units have a federation at the National level. What then is the picture that emerges from the multiplicity of organisations that are proposed to be ushered in. It will take a number of years, may be a decade or more, to bring the various institutions and their associates into effective functioning and in mutual relationship at the base, viz., the village and even more so at the Block, District, State and National levels. People and their institutions do not develop wisdom through administrative fiat or academic training. Administrative procedures and institutional instructions, of course, have their appropriate place. But wisdom denoting maturity of thought, understanding and action can only be derived from varied and dynamic experiences through which individuals or institutions grow by the process of trial and error.

The population in the countryside of India is a colossus. No institutional arrangements however extensive in magnitude or imaginative in concept can take care of the basic training of such large numbers of people. There is the further question of securing the services of a sufficiently large number of instructors who can continue running the training institutions without themselves growing stale in the process. Such instructors are not very large in number. The Community Development Programme, therefore, has been experimenting with the alternative idea of people training themselves. Gram Sahayak camps in villages, which started on the subject of agriculture, was the first pioneering effort in this direction. Progressive cultivators from each

village were asked to join their counter-parts from other villages in a Gram Sewak circle, aggregating about fifty in number. The training was conducted in camps. The trainees trained each other by mutual exchange of experiences and also through discussions with officials, specialists and demonstrations conducted on the spot by respective departments. About a million people have already been trained on this pattern. These camps have been successful beyond our expectations. It is now intended to carry the same pattern of training for progressive villagers in all other fields of development, such as public health, women, youth and children's activities, etc. The trained Gram Sahayaks will form nucleus of the functional organisations in the villages in which they dwell. They will compete with each other in extending their knowledge and experiences to their neighbours. Those who excel in this process will be picked up for higher camps at Block levels also for study tour of places of their subject-matter interest. The process will be carried to the District, State and National level. As the programme proceeds, there will be need for establishing short-term institutional courses for the higher level Gram Sahayaks which can be provided in the respective technical institutions at State or National levels.

When the process is complete it will be clear that at the primary village level, we shall have the Panchayat as the statutory administrative institution dealing with the planning and implementation of all development activities. There will be the Village Cooperative which will be

responsible for activities on the economic aspect of village life. There will be the Village School which will become the community centre radiating youth and vitality both in thought and action. There will then be a large number of Associate Organisations at the Village level laterally supporting these basic institutions, and where circumstances so warrant, balancing them for the right course of action. There will be the higher echelons of all these organisations at Block, District, State and National level, complementing each other. The bane of party-politics which is now eating into the core of the nation in self and mutually destructive activities will, in the new context, have very little play at the village level. For, administration and the points of action at that level will be too near to the life of the people for their representatives to get away with mere promises, exhortations or recriminations. The Associate Organisations, which will develop and function on their own, will have their respective subject-matter influences and pressures to exert on the basic institutions as against the present suicidal strains and stresses in them.

The pattern that emerges, therefore, will be one of continuing integration of functional interests at progressive levels. Thus the family with its varied colours and needs will encompass in steadily expanding circles, the Village, Block, District, State and the Nation. A new synthesis of culture will emerge out of the debris of the past and the turmoil of the present. The particles of rain will grow into drops, trickles,

streams and rivers and then find their ultimate
consummation in the mighty Indian ocean.
Do we have an alternative for survival ?

VII

Wider Horizon

Bastion or Bastille ?

There is a common saying in Bengal that when the aunt is more concerned about the welfare of the boy than his mother, the case is one of grave suspicion.

For 50 years, our leaders made common cause with the people to fight the colonial power. If the country was to move forward, they declared, the Government of the country must belong to the people. Gandhiji elaborated the thesis further by claiming that 'Swaraj'¹ was the birthright of every Indian and 'Swaraj' meant decentralisation of State power and democratisation of administration till the State had virtually withered away except for broad purposes of coordination, defence and external relations.

The Constitution of India which came into force on January 26, 1950, with the Parliament and the State Legislatures, was the first step in the direction of the 'Swaraj' promised to the people. From the first step to the last, the distance is nearly 2,000 miles and the gap is what can be expected between the urban settlements which are the power centres and the countryside which continue inarticulate and half-famished. 'Swaraj' would be still-born until this yawning gap has been bridged. Instead of attempting to bridge

1. Self-Government.

the gap, we have destroyed during these twelve years of Independence, most of the intermediary stages of Local Self-Government. Such institutions should have provided a secure foundation for the democracy we are pledged to establish in this country where individualism had acquired over the centuries a licence with a vengeance.

We destroyed Local Self-Government Institutions because, we say, they had grown to be seats of decadence, factions, inefficiency and maladministration. We nurtured the illusion, and interested people encouraged this thinking in us, that it was much easier to administer the country through Government servants deployed at the Division, District, Sub-Division, Taluqa and Village levels. While being an unwitting party to this death sentence on democracy at the ground level, we failed to recognise that there could be no democracy in the Parliament unless this democracy grew from the family upwards all along the line. We ignored the crucial fact that the sovereignty we claim for ourselves as a people was one which was secured by us from an alien power which ruled this country by occupation. Between this and a Government by representation, the distance is more than the distance between the North and South poles. It is amazing that a people with the maturity such as we claim, still do not realise that sovereignty in a democracy can only be conferred from below by a sovereign people.

It will be contended that our Constitution has bestowed freedom and sovereignty on our people through its directive principles. We should ask

ourselves for a moment whether the bulk of our people have the understanding of the rights that accrue to them from the Constitution. Have they the wherewithal individually or organisationally today, to exert their rights under the Constitution in a court of law if these rights are transgressed either by a wily "Few" amongst them or by the petty Government servants? What does the answer reveal?

The scheme for Democratic Decentralisation suggested by the Balwantray Mehta Study Team was a step farther in the extension of democracy towards the people. The proposal was acclaimed with enthusiasm by the National Development Council. Andhra and Rajasthan have already implemented the programme on a State-wide scale. Six or seven other States will follow soon. The remaining States also are going ahead processing the scheme. Yet, in the face of all these, there is strong resistance on the part of many a so-called leader of people on the one hand and many a veteran Government servant on the other, who counsel that we should go slow, that the people have first to be ready to manage their own affairs before they are entrusted with responsibilities. Public memory is proverbially short. These loud arguments otherwise should have reminded us immediately of the identical language that the colonial rulers in India used against us and our leaders for decades. It is hardly realised that administration of the affairs of a people is something like the art of swimming which can only be mastered while one is in

the water and is really trying to float and move with the ground below, beyond his reach. No one ever has learnt swimming in any other way. No one has learnt administration either, without going through trials and errors in the process.

The voice against the extension of democracy therefore is the voice of the proverbial aunt. If the mother is alive, she should protect her son from the wiles of the scheming aunt. If she does, we would see earlier than we realise now, that most of the trouble in India today arises from the fact that administration is far too remote, far too concentrated at far too few a point, to be effective or democratic over the inevitably long distance control system. We would realise then that the unrest we see around in political parties and elsewhere is due largely to one single factor, namely that our Government, as it functions today, does not offer creative outlet to the tens of thousands of dynamic minds and hands in political parties and outside which cry to give a hand to the basic task of reconstruction of the motherland. Democracy in India, because of our predominant rural economy and the peculiar geography and history, will have to be of a different kind. Our democracy will demand progressive amendments of the Constitution till the Government now controlled by the Parliament and the State Legislature travels back to the masters in progressive stages.

Thus, there will in future be a Central Government, a State Government, a District Government, a Block Government and a Village

Government. The Village Government will be the basic unit of our sovereign democracy with the maximum of powers to govern such of the affairs of the village as fall within its own sphere of operation surrendering inter-village responsibilities to the next higher body. Assumption of powers within its own sphere and surrender of those which involve inter-unit co-operation will be the feature from the ground upwards till the Parliament functions as an instrument largely for coordination of national policies, for defence and external affairs.

To sum up, the sovereignty by representation is still to grow. This will not, until democracy has travelled all along the line up to the family not in the form of self-Government at the courtesy of higher institutions but as Local Government guaranteed by the Constitution. The trials and errors involved in the process of reaching this consummation will constitute the training for democratic sovereignty. This cannot be bypassed. The voice against the urgency and the inevitability of the process is the voice of the wily "Few" and their counterparts in the Government agency. If we look around, we shall see how so-called democracy failed to decipher the "Writing on the wall" in time, and grew into a luxury to be superseded by autocracy. We call ourselves a wise people. This demands the capacity to learn from the errors of others. Shall we wake up ?

Wider Horizon

August 15, 1947. The flood gate has opened. The flood tide sweeps us all. When the ebb tide returns it finds us dazed, bewildered. We discover, self-Government is the beginning of a pilgrimage, not a consummation. Destination is freedom. Man alone is heir to it. Freedom has to be won by each one. It has to be promoted and conserved, always.

Our intentions were good, our actions lagged behind. We swore by Bapu, but his heart was far off languishing where light was not, air was not. We prayed. We plunged. The old concept was reborn in new garb. "Community Development" we christened it. We dashed headlong with people in their conglomeration. We trekked across the sub-continent against lights, against shades. We laughed, we sang, we cried.

A Government programme to start with, the pilgrimage is taking the colours and substance of a movement. We have stumbled, we have gasped for breath, we have stood up—we are on the move again. Failings and pitfalls have been many. Many more stare ahead. What movement has ever been free from these? We have resolved to steer through them all. We must.

Communications spread out, army of liberation expands. We touched the horizon we

knew. Lo—there are wider horizons beyond. We meet kindred souls aching from many fronts, many lands. We must greet them all. We are caught in the movement of the cosmos ; and so, we belong to all space, all times, and speak and act for these all.

The trickle that was born on Bapu's birthday, October 2, 1952, has grown to be a surging torrent. The ship is on the sails. Shores have receded far behind. The wide ocean around, far as eyes can see, the mind can fathom. We prick our ears, we brace our muscles. We meet fellow voyagers. We see they are fellow sailors. Blue waters from the unknown play against the starboard. They whisper "No fear, new world yonder, Master is on the wheel".

VIII

Epilogue

Epilogue

No other programme sponsored by Government anywhere in the world, so far known, has been subjected to a more rigorous probe in each of its facets from year to year, stage to stage. Official and non-official agencies have collaborated in it jointly as also severally. The probe has not been confined to national agencies alone. Foreign and international agencies have all collaborated with equal ardour. No other programme in India touches more intimately the life of the bulk of our population. The programme naturally comes into sharp focus for review and evaluation in the hands of our free and independent press as well.

The reviews and evaluation reports have served as a running commentary on the programme ever since the programme was born. The commentary is growing in depth and volume with expansion in the interest over the programme. The operators in the programme have been kept on their toes, thanks to these running commentaries. The emphasis in the programme, the priorities and the control continue to be adjusted visibly from year to year, invisibly almost from month to month, in conformity with the consensus of these commentaries.

The country-wide programme within the short span of seven years has undergone radical

change in outlook, emphasis and orientation. That a Government programme in this underdeveloped sub-continent could undertake with such rapid strides to furrow the new track into a people's programme is a tribute largely to the sensitiveness of the programme to the reactions of the people as also to the vigour and objectivity of the commentators.

The compilation in the foregoing pages will have made a contribution to the programme if it can accelerate the vigour of the controversy over the programme and the substance of the commentary hereafter.