

Essay on Indian Villages of The Future

There are many in our country who idealizes our villages. Gandhiji was one of them. Rabindranath also had a yearning for the quiet countryside where one could vegetate or ruminate according to one's fancy. And yet, perhaps, few of us today would wish to be permanent dwellers in a village. We like to be swept forward in the current of modern life even at the risk of being rendered dizzy with the whirl of perpetual motion. We do not wish to be left in the back-water of a bygone age which is what life in a village is no one will, for a moment, undervalue the quietness, the sweetness, and even the poetry that the green fields, the blue skies, the colorful scenery of a village present to our eyes. But modern life is full of activity. There is so much to do all around, so much to change and to build anew. In the past, the man was the slave of an unknown destiny, the victim of chance events. Today, as the poet sang "man is the master of things," and therefore man has to work in order to build up a 'brave new world' which, he feels, is for him to make or to unmake. The city and not the village is the place where most of this work has to be done.

Villages, of course, cannot be abolished. As long as the earth has to be cultivated to give us our daily bread, we must have villages – small, semi-self-contained settlements where the tillers of the soil live in close touch with the earth, and in intimate and fruitful cooperation with their fellowmen who cater to their small needs in many ways. But the villages of the morrow will not be at all like the villages of the past or even of today. They will have to be urbanized. They will have to be something between a village and a town, – a snug little town in the midst of orchards and gardens and surrounded by green corn-fields.

The first step towards this urbanization to bring electricity to

every cottage. Electricity will remove the depressing darkness of rural evenings. An illuminated night-time will mean an extension of the day, and therefore, more work and amusement. Not only with our homes look brighter, we will have clubs and libraries and even “continuation schools” for our workers. Try to imagine an electrified village humming with activities of all kinds, physical and intellectual, and the difference from the village of today will be at once apparent. Fortunately, our hydro-electric multipurpose schemes Bhakra Nangal, Damodar, Hirakud, Tungabhadra, etc. will soon carry electric power to distant villages and thus transform them.

Such village will also have a more prosperous economy. The villager will not depend on the had-plow and manual irrigation. Largest-scale farming with mechanized plows will lead to a vast increase in production, and therefore in rural prosperity. The electrical motor will pump water from rivers and deep tube-wells for irrigating the land. In a similar way, the outlook for dairy and poultry farming will be revolutionized. These will be of the modern mechanized type such as therein Holland or Switzerland. A visit to the state dairies near Bombay and Calcutta will give us some idea of what they will look like. Beginnings have already been made and will soon get underway.

Rural economy rests on agriculture backed by small cottage industries. The importance of the artisan and the craftsman who bring to bear upon their art and craft the personal touch, the hereditary skill that makes for beauty, will always remain. But electrification will also lead to the setting up of small machines which will save labor and increase production. Ambitious projects of developing cottage industries on the Japanese model may do something to change the outlook in our villages, if and when they are realized. The cottagers will have their small machines to manufacture parts that will go into a common pool for the making of bigger things. The watch

industry in Switzerland is organized on this plan.

A modern village will have scope for many new industries, like canning fruits, pasteurizing milk, producing better and so on. Necessarily these will bring increased wealth to the villages. They will also mean a more vital existence. The lazy indifference of the villages of today will be substituted by a wide-awake, many-sided outlook.

The future village of my dream will have all the amenities of the city without the dreariness that goes with it. It will feel the stir of life without its fretful fever. It will not allow nerves to become frayed nor the mind to become weary. It will cherish beauty and peace as things to be valued, but not at the expense of that dynamic urge which sweeps us through the years from change to change unceasingly. We are looking forward to the time when the completion of our river-valley projects will help us to transform our village into garden cities.