

ग्रामोद्योग दर्शन



KHADI-VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION
PAVILION
WORLD AGRICULTURAL FAIR
NEW DELHI

INDIA LIVES IN HER VILLAGES

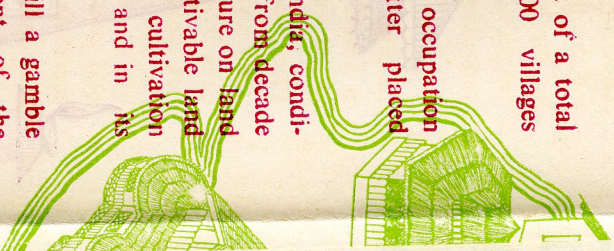
About 295 millions or nearly 83 per cent of a total population of 356 millions of India live in 556,000 villages scattered all over the country.

Agriculture in India is not an economic occupation—as it is in most western and in some of the better placed Asian countries—as much as it is a way of life.

The rate of growth of population in India, conditioned as it is by social mores, has steadily risen from decade to decade since 1921. This has increased the pressure on land year after year. The per capita availability of cultivable land is one of the lowest in the world. The unit of cultivation generally is uneconomic in size, in productivity and in its capacity to sustain the farmer and his family.

As in the past, agriculture in India is still a gamble in the rains. Total irrigated area is only 17 per cent of the total area under cultivation; and only on about 11 per cent of this area more than a single crop is raised. Agriculture is thus essentially a single crop, seasonal occupation, unsupported by other ancillary activities such as poultry and sheep farming etc., and is not therefore able to provide continuous employment through the year.

Although the preponderant majority of India's labour force is reported to be "gainfully occupied" in agriculture, the duration of employment is very small. About 14 per cent of the so-called "gainfully employed" have work for an hour or less per day; 4 per cent have work for 2 hours or less per day; 11.5 per cent have work for 4 hours or less and 17.3 per cent have work for 6 hours or less. Even if we consider the last group as fully employed, 46 per cent or 64 millions out of the 138.8 millions reported to be gainfully employed are in fact severely underemployed.



days in the year, the increase in the aggregate demand for goods and services will be indeed phenomenal, and will provide an effective basis for expansion of production of consumer goods in common demand. Today even with the very low levels of output of even such essentials as cloth, consumer goods industries face problems of accumulation because effective demand is low. No substantial growth in industries of the modern type is possible so long as purchasing power in the hands of the masses does not increase. With their limited skill, only village industries offer an immediate scope for providing work to the unemployed.

Many advocate decentralised industrialisation with modern techniques involving the use of power. This in theory is sound. But in India, electricity will become available to about 18,000 villages by the end of the Second Five Year Plan, and by the end of the Third Plan, electricity may become available, say to twice that number of villages. In any case it is clear that the major portion of the country will not have electricity which is the cheapest source of power.

Resources of India in coal and oil, which are the other two principal sources of power, are extremely limited. It is therefore idle speculation to imagine that power driven machines can be introduced all over the country. Industries in the villages can have only manually operated machines for the next twenty or thirty years. Efforts can also be made to use animal power so that some substantial improvement is effected in the productivity per unit of time and of labour. Beyond that very little seems possible for the time being because (i) people have not the required technical skill and will need time to learn them, (ii) income levels are too low to warrant any undue increase in the levels of production, (iii) sources and availability of power are extremely limited. Hence village industries even with traditional techniques have a place, and their capacity to contribute to economic betterment viewed against the present levels of income and living is not insignificant.

For several decades to come, agriculture in India will remain only a seasonal industry. Even the completion of all river-valley projects will not provide complete security against the vagaries of the monsoon. Consequently while some measure of protection can be effectively provided,