

Rural entrepreneurs

Villages were self sufficient in getting most of their requirements. After the industrial development, gradually the cottage industries have started disappearing and now a situation has been created that not only pots, tools, cloth and soaps, even food grains and vegetables are bought from cities. Most of the villages are becoming old age settlements. Young people, both men and women, are going away to cities in search of jobs, since it is no more economical to stay and work in the villages. If the same trend continues, there could be dangerous problems in cities to provide housing, water, sanitation, health, law and order. Thus, it is very important to encourage cottage industries like food processing, wood carving, pottery, herb collection and processing, small scale nurseries, bee keeping, backyard poultries and dairy, even small scale aquaculture, vermicomposting etc.

Ravi at Sathyamangalam in Erode District, Tamil Nadu and Dumballi Sivamma, of Shimoga district, Karnataka have proved that, with vision and commitment, even the poorest of the poor can lead a comfortable life. Both of them started vermicomposting about 10 years ago and are now successful in their ventures and in turn have inspired many people to start vermicomposting.

Dumballi Sivamma, a young widow, owned a small piece of land. After learning vermicomposting techniques on her own, she started practicing on a small scale basis in her backyard. She now produces 10 tonnes of good quality vermicompost per week and gets a net income of Rs. 1500. She owns 10 cattle, which produce enough cowdung for her vermicomposting unit and now employs five people of the village. With technical and organising support of Bharatiya Agro-industry Foundation (BAIF), Tiptur and Dharmasthala Shri Manjunatheswara Rural Development Project in Karnataka, many women self help groups have undertaken crafts activity.

The organizations have arranged for marketing of their products and providing employment to the weaker sections of the village population. A few unemployed young women agriculture graduates have started nurseries to raise vegetable seedlings. They not only lead a comfortable life, but have helped many local farmers to grow high value vegetables and make a good profit.

T V S Academy at Hosur has taken lead in educating about 1500 farmers to grow organic vegetables and making all sincere efforts to help them in marketing, apart from buying a part of the products for their canteens in their various industrial units. In Bangalore, a combinedly organised green shop by name "Era Organic", at Dollar's colony sells certified organic products only. This is mainly



done to directly access organic products from growers by providing transportation and a premium price. Technical support is provided in establishing shade nets and green houses to grow high value vegetables organically. This is not a business, but a service for both producers and consumers. So, if such efforts are made by NGOs, individuals and administrative bodies of agriculture and horticulture, universities and research institutions, through network in their services, we can inspire rural youth to start village based enterprises and avoid migration to cities.

It is very important to empower rural India to establish stronger rural economy. If we really think seriously about the plight of the society which dreamt of modern industrial progress, one should be ashamed of the development that has happened in this country which benefited only 5 % of the population. According to media reports, many people have lost their jobs in Gulf countries and are leading a dismal life. A similar situation is arising because of migration from rural areas to urban centres in our country. People who migrated to Surat from Orissa and from Tamil Nadu to Singapore, face the same problem. This is due to the collapse of the rural economy system. Therefore, building rural economy is crucial. Otherwise, we will have to face more hardships in future.

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