

Village Development*

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Early in 1991 I visited Ashill, a small village in Norfolk, England. It's a very quiet place, with perhaps a thousand people. The most prominent building is the modest stone church, which was what had brought me here. As soon as I entered the churchyard, I found what I was looking for: it was the tombstone of Frank Lugard Brayne. It gives Brayne's name, his dates--born 1882, died 1952--and his most prized decorations, a Victoria Cross from World War I and companionships in the orders of the Star of India and the Indian Empire. At the bottom there is also a verse from Luke 22: "I am among you as he that serveth."

It's appropriate, because Frank Brayne served during the 1920s as the deputy commissioner (the Punjabi equivalent of collector) of the Gurgaon District, which lies immediately south of Delhi. There, he single-handedly conceived of and executed what became famous as the "Gurgaon Experiment." He publicized this work through several books on what he called "village uplift," all published by Oxford University Press. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India praised his work highly. I suspect that Brayne generated more attention and publicity for his district than any other district administrator in the history of British India.

Appearing before that royal commission, Brayne gave some background. Since 1920, he said, he had worked "in one of the poorest districts in the Punjab, I have been there for six years, I have visited thousands of villages, I have got 1,200 villages, I suppose I have been into every village once and many villages several times; I spend the whole of the cold weather and a good deal of the hot weather in the villages themselves, so that I have a very close acquaintance with the actual cultivators." On the basis of this experience, he continued, he was convinced that "we are beginning [at] the wrong end with agriculture before uplift."

Brayne explained that he "would insist with all my power that no improvement of agriculture is of any use whatever without uplift. An uplift campaign must precede and accompany all efforts at improvement of agriculture. Improvement in agriculture cannot precede an improvement in the standard of living and no improvement in the standard of living is possible without breaking the hard brake of custom which grips the rural area. The people do not know how to spend the money they have got, so what is the use of giving them more money till they have learnt this lesson? They live in the most unnecessary squalor, misery, suffering, degradation and disease." Improving agriculture was

easy: a matter of "better seed, better implements, and more manure." The hard part was "to jerk the villager out of his old groove, convince him that improvement is possible, and kill his fatalism by demonstrating that both climate, disease, and pests can be successfully fought."

How? Brayne and his wife Iris (how much credit she deserves in all this is an open question—probably more than she was given) set up rural schools in Gurgaon. For boys, there was a school of rural economy, where "the dignity of labour is the first and greatest lesson to be taught" and where the curriculum included not only agricultural methods but sanitation and public health, stock breeding and forestry. Girls, however, were at the "heart and center of the uplift campaign." Brayne said that India is the most backward of all countries because it regards women as hardly human. That's why in 1926 Iris directed 850 girls studying childcare, first-aid, village sanitation, and more traditional domestic skills like sewing, knitting, and cooking.

For the district's adults, Brayne explained that he set out to "deluge the area with every form of propaganda and publicity that we could devise or adopt or afford." He distributed thousands of pamphlets and hired some 30 young Indians as "village guides." The guides were young men, he said, "who look at village life as one big whole and can advise him [the villager] generally about the many problems of his life." The emphasis in their training was on practical matters, because Brayne distained traditional agricultural schools. The graduates of the Punjab Agricultural College in Lyallpur--now Faisalabad in Pakistan—could not "hitch a pair of bullocks."

Like Allan Hume and Augustus Voelcker and Albert Howard, Brayne selected soil fertility as the starting point for agricultural development in India: "It is utterly useless and worse than useless," he said, "introducing better machinery, better seeds and better farming until we can stop the people ruining their land and impoverishing and degrading themselves by the making and burning of dung cakes." His solution was to have villagers dig pits into which their animal, vegetable, and human waste would be dumped, to be later excavated as fertilizer. It was a procedure that not only improved soil fertility, of course, but helped make villages cleaner.

The Gurgaon Experiment had a livestock component too. "At Gurgaon," Brayne told the commission, "we have got 600 stud bulls; I believe we have the biggest breeding establishment in the world." Gradually, Brayne hoped, he could upgrade the quality of the bullocks essential to India's farmers, but a lack of serum meant that "we have got every known epidemic raging." Moreover, Brayne's requests for improved bulls from the Government Livestock Farm at Hissar, a town two districts to the northwest, had been reduced "in order to enable Hissar to fritter away its bulls in twos and threes all over the Province." (One hears a hint of exhaustion, and Brayne, in fact, was very tired. In written

testimony he accused the government of seeing the local district officer as "a convenient beast of burden to be loaded with routine and drudgery.")

But Brayne persisted. There had been no iron plows in the district in 1920; Brayne urged farmers to buy them, and by 1926 there were 1,337. In 1920, Gurgaon farmers used leather buckets to lift water from wells; by 1926, the district had six hundred Persian wheels, which Brayne recommended. In 1920, the district grew only traditional varieties of wheat; by 1926, there were 15,000 acres of an improved wheat from Pusa. What was Brayne proudest of? Nothing as grandiose as a new mentality, an end to fatalism: Brayne was proudest of the hundreds of deep pits that the villagers had dug for their organic wastes. They were the one thing, he was convinced, that would survive him.

They didn't. I know, because I've looked.

It's not much of a trip. Leaving Delhi's airport, you pass a highway sign pointing left to Delhi and, in equally large letters, right to Gurgaon. What do arriving tourists think when they see that name? Nothing, presumably: the Gurgaon Experiment is very, very old news.

Because Gurgaon District is so close to Delhi, its northern half is dotted with housing subdivisions, country clubs, motels, and factories. Automobiles are made at the biggest of these factories. They're modified Suzukis, sold under the name Maruti and assembled in a plant employing 30,000 people.

On the district's south side, however, Gurgaon is still a primitive place. There is an explanation for this, because the southern part of Gurgaon is dominated ethnically by the Meo, a Muslim group that challenged government officers throughout the British period. As early as 1879, a report spoke of the Meo as "comparatively lazy and superlatively unthrifty."

In sum, the northern half of Gurgaon District today is generations ahead of anything Brayne imagined. In a way, it's ahead of rural Ashill, where Brayne lies buried. The southern half of the district isn't that different from the Gurgaon he knew.

Looking for some relic of Brayne's work, I found a remarkable antiquarian book dealer in the main market of Gurgaon town. Antiquarian book dealers are rare in India, and Vijay Kumar Jain specialized in government documents, a niche rare anywhere. Perhaps that helped keep the name Brayne fresh in his mind, although Jain said his father had known Brayne personally. Nobody else remembered Brayne, Jain said, and there were no memorials.

Later, I found half an exception, on John Hall Road. The funny thing is that there has never been anyone named John Hall. The road takes its name instead

from the John Hall, which is the colloquial name of the meeting hall used by the government employees of Gurgaon. The hall stands directly across from Brayne's old residence, still fronted with potted plants in a long driveway and still occupied by the Gurgaon deputy commissioner. But on the hall there is a plaque stating that the building was dedicated in 1925 to the memory of John Goble Brayne, the second son of Mr. F. L. Brayne. No age is given for what I take to have been a boy. Brayne had told the commission that "a magnificent hall is being erected at Gurgaon by public subscription as the centre of all our many activities," but he had made no mention of a son.

Official authorities, well represented by the commission, thought that Brayne's work was outstanding. Malcolm Hailey, an eminent governor of the United Provinces, contributed an introduction to one of Brayne's books, *The Reconstruction of Rural India*. Never before, Hailey wrote, had the British "deliberately attempted to effect that change in the psychology of the peasant, and in his social and personal habits, without which it is impossible materially to improve his conditions of life." Why had it not been tried before? Hailey's answer was that "not many of us, to tell the final truth, have had the missionary spirit necessary for the enterprise."

But if Brayne was so successful, why is so little left of his work? The answer is not that India has progressed beyond compost pits, Hissar bulls, and Persian wheels. It is that the experiment collapsed as soon as Brayne left Gurgaon. The Royal Commission on Agriculture feared precisely this result: "The moment you disappear from the Gurgaon district, what will happen to the wholesale propaganda which you are carrying on?" Brayne had been optimistic in reply: "I think my successor will continue it."

Not so. We know what happened when Brayne left Gurgaon because of an account given in *Rusticus Loquitur*, by Malcolm Lyall Darling. A civil servant of wide interests, Darling was the one who brought E. M. Forster to India and who later supervised the work of George Orwell at the BBC. On his own, he toured Punjabi villages on horseback, talked to villagers everywhere, and published what they told him. By coincidence, he came through Gurgaon seven months after Brayne's departure in 1928.

"Now, seven months later," Darling wrote, "all is changed, and the most optimistic estimate is that amongst the peasants themselves not more than one-third of the activity remains. The Gurgaon villagers find the improved bulls too heavy, the improved plow too expensive, and the Persian wheel unsuited to spots where the groundwater is deep or the water table subject to rapid fluctuations." And Brayne's darling, the compost pits? There is no one to empty them, Darling writes. There are not enough sweepers to do the work, and farmers will not accept Brayne's idea that villagers should clean their own. Besides, if all the organic matter is turned into compost, there will be no

cooking fuel, and it does the villagers little good to grow more food if they cannot cook it.

Where did Brayne go wrong? Darling points to Brayne's dictatorial methods. Everything Brayne accomplished, Darling quotes one observer as saying, was done "by order and through fear." Is it so? From a distance of 60 years it's hard to say for sure, but Brayne himself told the commission that "so long as they prefer rings to mosquito nets..., I do not think it is much use helping them with agriculture." And so, convinced that the Indian practice of putting capital into jewelry was wasteful, Brayne insisted that any man having business with him remove his earrings before coming into his presence.

It's unfair from this distance to call Brayne a Mussolini, but in 1928 Brayne did tell the commission, "I suppose some sort of a Mussolini influence is necessary to awaken the people." Even in 1928, however, there were people who disagreed. Malcolm Darling, for one, considered Brayne's emphasis on propaganda to be absolutely wrong. The reliance on propaganda, Darling wrote, "is the chief cause of the ephemeral character of... [the experiment's] success." Darling goes on to distinguish between "the teacher... [who] tries to make people think things out for themselves [and] the propagandist ... [who] saves them the trouble of thinking at all.... Of teaching," he concluded, "we cannot have too much; but of propaganda we can hardly have too little."

Over the next 35 years India searched in vain for a more empathetic approach to rural development. The lineage of experiments can be traced back even before Brayne to the YMCA, which in 1915 began a program of what it called "rural reconstruction." The name was coined by one K. T. Paul, and it is significant, because it implies continuity as well as change--a graft instead of an uprooting.

The YMCA work was based at Martandam, a village not far south of Trivandrum in what is now Tamil Nadu. Here a Cornell graduate named Spencer Hatch developed a comprehensive program specializing in education and spare-time industries such as beekeeping and poultry production. In Hatch's words, the program set out to be "the people's own"; its goal was to train them "to help themselves upwards on all sides of life."

Hatch set up a School of Rural Reconstruction to train workers, and in 1932 he himself went briefly to Baroda in Gujarat. Baroda (now Vadodara), was then the center of a princely state, and the prince wanted to establish his own program of rural reconstruction. He entrusted the work to V. T. Krishnamachari, who, after Independence, would serve as Jawaharlal Nehru's right-hand man on the important Planning Commission. (From this appointment alone, one might guess that uplift would be strongly supported at the highest levels of India's government.) In terms reminiscent of Brayne at Gurgaon, Krishnamachari wrote of the Baroda program that "no lasting improvement can

be achieved in the conditions of rural life unless all sides of it are attacked at the same time." With Hatch's help, Baroda established four-member teams to work in agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, and engineering. The teams toured the state, offering help to the cooperatives widely established there.

In 1937 the government of the United Provinces undertook its own program of rural development. A new department was created, and rural development officers were appointed to stir "a desire in the villagers for improvement." Their assignment--and it will sound familiar by now--was to "change their whole outlook on life...[and] help the village people realize that their salvation lies in their own hands." The work was supposed to include the establishment of manure pits, improved livestock, and better agricultural implements, but little was done because the province's Congress Party government resigned in 1939, and civil servants who did *not* resign in sympathy were shunned.

A few years later, in 1945, yet another venture was tried. The India Village Service was launched in the United Province's Aligarh District by American Methodist and Presbyterian missions. The work was directed by the missionary William Wiser, who, along with his wife Charlotte, wrote *Behind Mud Walls*, perhaps the best-known study of Indian village life. It's a study of Karimganj, a village near Mainpuri; first published in 1930, it went through many editions in the United States and is still in print in India.

The India Village Service was small: in 1950 the core of what the service called "teachers" consisted, in all, of eight people—four men, four women, all Indian. All were college graduates. Each was given a bicycle and a cluster of villages. The familiar objectives were to help villagers help themselves in seven domains: health, sanitation, homemaking, agriculture, recreation, industry, and general education. The teachers set out to win the villagers' confidence and learn their "felt needs." (How deep go the roots of development jargon!) The teachers in turn provided accurate technical information. Wiser wrote that the teachers were expected to work "in the spirit of *humility, sympathy, understanding, appreciation and love.*" It's Gandhian as much as it is Christian, of course, and it's a very long way from Frank Brayne.

Of these several experiments parallel to Gurgaon I have no firsthand knowledge, but India soon embarked on a vast national experiment in community development, and with this I do have some personal acquaintance because the work began, of all places, in Etawah, the old home of Allan Octavian Hume.

Paradoxically, there was a time during the 1950s when visiting scholars interested in India's rural development were told to avoid Etawah. It was a showplace, they were told, no longer representative of Indian conditions. U.S. Ambassador Chester Bowles had been a visitor. So had Paul Hoffman, president

of the Ford Foundation. So, literally with a red carpet, had Eleanor Roosevelt. I do not know how many other famous visitors came to Etawah, but the list was long enough that Albert Mayer, the American city planner in charge of the project from 1948 to 1952, feared that the work would be undermined by all the attention. The villagers in the neighborhood, he wrote, were complaining that the project staff had no interest in anything except showing off to bigwigs.

What was going on?

The highway from Agra to Etawah crosses the Jumna, with the Taj Mahal visible downstream. It stays within a few miles of the west bank of the Jumna for many miles, but you never see the river again, only sandy, scrub-covered hills that drop down toward the river. "The police don't go here," one man told me, alluding to bandits. Perhaps it is so, but there are roads that branch off the highway and cross the Jumna downstream from Agra. I took one of them and in daylight at least the countryside seemed perfectly safe, with occasional fields of sorghum wherever there was a bit of flat land. Over the rougher spots donkeys carried loads of fuelwood to weighing and shipping yards. The only disturbing fact was that the poor Jumna, 150 miles downstream from Delhi, was still literally black with untreated sewage.

On the left-hand side of the highway and stretching away toward the distant Ganges, the chief winter crop was mustard, four feet tall in January's full bloom. It stretched field to field, so that from a distance dozens of fields merged, bounded only by the sky and groves of mangoes or acacia. (I gave a ride through part of this mustard sea to two gentlemen who were working on the upcoming census of India. They commented on the beauty of the countryside, felt it as much as I did.) Little Ganges Canal water reached this far, however, even though we passed plenty of Proby Cautley's fine old branch canals. It was the old tailender problem.

Instead, farmers used wells. Occasionally we passed crank-type cavity or dug wells, abandoned but not as old as they looked: one such well bore the inscription "Mr. Hiralal Lala, 1945: Public Works Department." Most farmers had switched to tube wells. Those for domestic use were operated by hand, but those for the fields were driven by diesel pumps or electricity. (Each fuel has its pros and cons: electricity supplies often fail in India, but on the eve of Desert Storm there were long lines of farmers sitting on jerricans and waiting for diesel fuel at the local gas stations. There was panic buying all across India in those days.) I saw only one Persian wheel, the sort of thing Frank Brayne had recommended in Gurgaon: the bullock walked round and round, attended by a boy.

No sooner had I arrived in Etawah than a reporter for the local newspaper materialized and asked for an interview. I was amazed at the attention but

dodged him and asked instead if he knew about the Etawah Pilot Project. I drew a blank. I tried the personal touch: "Albert Mayer?" Another blank.

I settled for directions to the collectorate, the district's old administrative center. It was on the edge of town and was surrounded by large old bungalows on spacious grounds. The collectorate itself was a compound with scattered buildings around which dozens of lawyers congregated. They sat on chairs before tables shaded by metal or bamboo awnings, and they wore black coats and judicial white collars. Patiently, they waited for customers. (I think of Brayne. Asked if the villagers of Gurgaon were fond of litigation, he replied, "it is their chief hobby.")

I walked around until a peremptory voice called out: "What do you want?" I turned and saw a lawyer, collar in place, Hindu sect mark on his forehead. I asked where the district's development office was. "Not here," was his reply. I said I was interested in the "pilot project." Again a blank. "Albert Mayer?" Nothing. Then a "come." We walked over to one of the courtrooms, where a small crowd gathered. I took out my tiny camera, but it was waved away from the sacred precinct. I tried my mantras: "Pilot Project?" "Albert Mayer?" Nothing.

I headed back to the city hall, in the center of town. The old Anglican church near the city hall was now an indoor badminton court. A Muslim employee of the Etawah City Board told me that the conversion was "shameful." I was surprised that he felt so strongly about it, especially when he made it plain that he wanted me to write his words down; he watched as I did so. Why? I am sure it was his way of commenting on the strained relations between Uttar Pradesh's Muslim and Hindu communities. When I asked as tactfully as I could about the difficulties faced by Muslims here in Etawah, he fell back on body language. A teenaged boy who walked around the town with me early one morning was more explicit: things were dangerous. His father was a senior engineer in Lucknow, the state capital; but for all his advantages as the son of such a father, the boy was still worried.

But how was it possible that nobody knew of Albert Mayer's work? Mayer had come to India during World War II as a colonel building military airfields. He had been introduced to Jawaharlal Nehru, then chief minister of the United Provinces. Americans being Americans, Mayer told Nehru what he would do if *he* was about to take charge of India. Mayer said he would set up a group of pilot projects and try to find the best way to rebuild India. Once he had the answer, he would literally tear down the half-million villages of the country and start over, brick by brick. Mayer would provide better housing, better roads, sewage disposal, water supply, mosquito control, irrigation, dispensaries and hospitals, schools, community houses, and warehouses.

Nehru, for reasons I do not understand, wrote a few months later to Mayer in New York and asked him if he wanted to try. Certainly Nehru was eager to transform rural India: as late as 1957 Nehru would say, "I am not really enamoured of the Indian village, as it is. I want it to change completely, gradually no doubt, but completely." Equally certainly, Nehru was unlikely to call upon the British to help him in that task.

Mayer soon met Arthur Mosher, an agricultural economist with a doctorate from the University of Chicago. Mosher had spent the last 15 years teaching at the Allahabad Agricultural Institute; now, with Sam Higginbottom retired in Florida, Mosher was principal of the school. Mosher seems to have persuaded Mayer of the impracticality of his (and Nehru's) ambition to rebuild the country: India couldn't afford it. What was the alternative? Mosher would later write: "I pulled out a ten-page project which I had been working on and gave a copy to Al. At that time I couldn't get the money. The approach was extension oriented, but where Allahabad, with its small tenuous extension staff put emphasis solely on education, Etawah stressed the input side and the need to insure supply lines." India would now import another American idea: Sam Higginbottom had tried to establish an Indian equivalent of the land-grant agricultural university; Mayer would try to establish the Indian equivalent of cooperative extension.

In the States, extension had evolved during the fight early in the century against the boll weevil. It was the great accomplishment of Seamon Knapp. (The memory of Knapp is jogged every time I drive under the Knapp Arch, which ties together the two main U.S. Department of Agriculture buildings in Washington, D.C.) Knapp's work had taken shape during the years when Sam Higginbottom was enrolled at Ohio State. Higginbottom just missed the curve, so to speak, and was a shade too soon to pick up the extension idea. By the time of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1928, he was all in favor of it. He testified that in Canada and the American South extension had "revolutionised rural life."

Now, with Mosher and Mayer, extension would be introduced in India. As early as 1946, Mayer wrote to Nehru that "over here our Department of Agriculture has evolved a very successful system of 'county agents' who not only give instructions, but who continuously circulate among the people, answer questions, take personal interest, and have gained the confidence and friendship of the cultivator." This was a task beyond the range of a city planner, so Mayer brought into his work Horace Holmes, an agricultural extensionist originally from Tennessee, then the New York State Extension System, and most recently from China.

How would an extension system work in India? The answer, in a nutshell, was like an India Village Service with money. There would be no arrogant "guides" here, no propagandistic hand. Mayer knew all about Brayne, and didn't want to go down that path. Mayer's extension agents were known in Hindi as "village

servants," although the official English translation was the less humble "village-level worker."

Mayer himself set the tone. A senior assistant would later write of the day Mayer's pickup truck broke down, stranding Mayer and one of his men. "At long last, one of the villagers arranged two ponies.... One of the owners of the ponies accompanied them to bring back the ponies. After Mr. Mayer had a ride for about a mile and half, he got down and insisted that the owner of the pony should ride." Mayer, this same assistant continued, "on the average ... worked for 18 to 20 hours a day. He ate very little when he was in the villages--a few oranges, a water melon or any other fruit he could find. His Indian colleagues did not have to make any arrangements for him."

Work got underway in 1948 with 64 villages; the number rose to 97 in a year. Another 125 were added in 1951. Mayer spread the village-level workers thickly, with one man for three or four villages. Rather than dictating to the people they served, the agents were expected to determine the most pressing need in each village, work with the villagers to solve it, then build on that relationship to undertake a wide array of cooperative projects that would ultimately lead the villagers to work without direction.

Only advice was given free: there were no grants-in-aid here, no programs of aided self-help. But the Etawah Pilot Project was soon able to point to dramatic successes. Wheat production tripled after the introduction of a new variety. Villagers balked at composting, so a rotational green manure was introduced instead. With it, of necessity, a moldboard plow was introduced: more than a thousand were in use by 1950, and they continued to be used even after the green manure was abandoned during the 1950s in favor of the chemical fertilizers that India was just beginning to use. Villagers helped rebuild roads and drain malarial ponds. A "rural youth organization" was set up along the lines of American 4-H clubs. Work even began on Mayer's original scheme of village reconstruction: subsidized brick was supplied through a cooperative kiln.

Meanwhile, more village-level workers were being trained. Holmes told one class of trainees that "you will be called upon to work as probably you have never worked before. You will be asked and expected to do nothing that those men supervising you do not do, but you will be expected to do everything they do. There is nothing of benefit to the farmer that you and I will hesitate to do because we might feel that it is beneath our dignity to perform menial tasks."

In 1952 Paul Hoffman came to take a look. He was president of the Ford Foundation, which was then setting up an office in India. Hoffman was impressed; so was Douglas Ensminger, an American agricultural extensionist accompanying him. Ensminger would run the foundation's Delhi office for 19 years. He and Hoffman were so impressed by Mayer's project that they agreed

to pour more than \$5,000,000 into building schools to train more village-level workers. At the same time, they gave the Allahabad Agricultural Institute \$1,000,000 to develop its own agricultural-extension program.

Even more important than the Hoffman-Ensminger visit was the one a year before by Chester Bowles. Formerly an advertising executive, Bowles had never set foot in India. Now, he was the new American ambassador. Within a month he was in Etawah and ready to make a major commitment to the project's enlargement.

How did it happen so fast? Why were these people so predisposed to buy into Etawah? The answer is that both Hoffman and Bowles had been primed by Yen Yang-ch'u, known in the United States as Y. C. James Yen. Working as education secretary for the Chinese national committee of the YMCA, Yen had introduced Spencer Hatch's "rural reconstruction" work to Hubei Province in the late 1920s. Yen went on during the 1940s to become a member of the Chinese Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction. With degrees from Yale and Princeton, he had an easy time impressing Americans. This was especially true in Hoffman's case, because before joining the Ford Foundation Hoffman had served as the first administrator of the Economic Cooperation Administration, the United States' post-World War II foreign-aid organization. Yen knew Bowles, too, though they shared fewer professional interests. Bowles acknowledges this in the first of the two memoirs he wrote on his years in India.

"When we first visited Etawah," Bowles wrote, "the work was being carried out in ninety-seven villages with some sixty thousand inhabitants. Village workers had been carefully trained, first to win the confidence of the villagers and then to introduce in each village new methods of fertilizing, better seeds, public health measures, primary education and literacy courses.... As I listened to the hard-working, dedicated instructors in the village worker school and watched workers in the fields and villages, it seemed that this was the key to the future of India and Asia. Here was an administrative framework through which modern scientific knowledge could be put to work for the benefit of the hundreds of millions of people who have so long lived in poverty. That night I went to work with pencil and paper. How many village workers would it take to cover every village in India? How many public health specialists would be needed? How many agricultural engineers, soil conservation experts, irrigation specialists?"

On Thanksgiving Day, 1951, Bowles met with Nehru and offered \$54 million in U.S. aid to begin expanding the Etawah work. The men agreed to spend the money over three years on approximately 50 projects, each with 300 villages. The planning document specified that each village in the program should be provided with adequate drinking water, with agricultural extension and veterinary services, with drainage facilities where needed, with irrigation for half its land, and with substantial grazing and forest reserves. Moreover, each group of 25 villages was to be clustered in a market unit, and each five market

units would be grouped in a "block," whose central settlement would have accommodations for a thousand families, electricity and telephone services, an agricultural school, a plant nursery, a small hospital, and small-scale industries.

Bowles was carried away by his own enthusiasm. "It is not difficult to foresee the day when the agricultural phase of Community Development will everywhere lead into this second phase of building, when teams of millions of people, young and old, will give a few hours a day to their village and country, after their own work is finished.... I can visualize a wave of construction which can sweep through 500,000 villages and change the face of the whole subcontinent."

Fifteen pilot extension areas were approved in 1951. Each covered 100 villages, and each was under the control of an extension director with a staff agricultural officer, three agricultural technicians, and about a dozen village-level workers. Other technical areas, such as education, would rely on cooperation from existing branches of government. At the top of the hierarchy was a Community Development Administration, reporting directly to Krishnamachari in the Planning Commission.

The project administrator was Sachindra Kumar Dey, a former employee of the General Electric Company and a man eager to get out of Mayer's shadow. The relationship between the two was not good: Mayer's own book about Etawah does not mention Dey; and though Dey wrote a book in which he *does* mention Mayer, he does so in only one paragraph, where he manages consistently to misspell Mayer's name. Mayer gradually withdrew.

In 1952 the government recommended the establishment of an additional 55 community-development blocks, each with 330 villages; a year later a second tier of less intensively supported national-extension-system blocks was proposed, each with about 100 villages and 60,000 people. In 1955 the government decided to divide the whole country into development blocks; almost half would be favored as the more intensively subsidized community-development blocks. Ten years later, in 1965, the entire country was covered by community-development blocks.

But how had the pilot project fared meanwhile? Bowles in 1954 wrote that "so far experience indicates that long before the end of the three years of subsidized work, profound improvements can be achieved in each village." Dey, the administrator, was even more effusive. Speaking on All-India Radio, he said: "India slumbers in her villages..., yet there was a time when our villages hummed with the music of working men and women.... [Now; with the program,] roads began to be built: schools, community centres, hospitals came up overnight. Demonstration farms, breeding and artificial insemination centres, fruit and vegetable gardens and nurseries began to spring up. New

village wells, reconditioning of old ones, paving of village lanes and drains assumed the form of a new mass movement.... Community Development promises to grow into a global mission ... to show the way out of the psychosis of fear and hatred which rules the destiny of man today."

Yet here I was wandering around Etawah, and no one knew what I was talking about when I said "pilot project" and "Albert Mayer." Finally I was directed to Mr. R. S. Agarwal, who ran a bookstore-cum-publishing house. "They came to me," Mr. Agarwal said. "They had no money for stationery. I said I would give them whatever they needed on credit." But what had they done, I asked? "They didn't work here," said Mr. Agarwal. I slumped. "They worked down in Lakhna and Maheva."

I got back in my car, drove past Victoria Hall (originally built for civic meetings but now used as another badminton court), and went down to Lakhna, perhaps ten miles away and close to the badland fringes of the Jumna.

I drove slowly through the single-lane, unpaved main street and was surprised at the obvious poverty of the place. It certainly didn't look like a showplace. I stopped to ask if anyone knew anything about a pilot project. I tried a doctor, a goldsmith, a book dealer. Everyone looked at me blankly.

I went on to Maheva, another five or ten miles. Here is where Mayer lived on his annual visits--lived at first in a temple, the only accommodation he could find. I got out of my car and tried again: "pilot project." Blank looks. "Albert Mayer?" Nothing. Then someone offered the words "first block." "Yes," I cried: "yes." I was quickly led to the Maheva Block Development Office.

None of this stumbling would have occurred, of course, if I had come to Maheva in an official capacity. But I hate the handcuffs of chauffeurs and official meetings, and here in Maheva, where I needed a little official meeting, I got one on the spot. Tables were set up in the unpaved but shaded courtyard of the office, the simplest kind of building, literally a block: one floor, perhaps 20 feet by 40. Milk tea was handed out in little clay cups that were tossed aside and shattered when empty, so the whole place over a period of years began to rise like a midden. People smiled, and there was only a slight murmur of discomfort when I asked how long it had been since the last visitor. "Ten years," someone quietly replied.

The man in charge--he turned out to be the assistant block development officer --pulled out a notebook and read off the hallowed phrase: "Pilot Development Project, September 15, 1948." I floundered for a question, and in response he told me that there were now nearly 40,000 families and 155,000 people in the block. (That's up from 20,000 families and 100,000 people in 1960). The block encompassed almost 80,000 acres, of which three-quarters were arable and

half irrigated. The average holding was two acres. In 1960 it had been twice that.

A small, thin man came quietly into the courtyard and shook hands. People on all sides deferred to him, yet he didn't look like any civil servant I had ever seen in India. Was it the bulky-knit sweater? The stubble? From the way people deferred to him, I assumed he was the block development officer, but he didn't look the part. Finally I asked him point blank if he was "the BDO." Everyone laughed. He smiled quietly and said no, he was just a farmer old enough to remember Albert Mayer. He corrected my pronunciation to a Germanic "Meyer."

We walked along a neatly paved brick lane to the temple where Mayer had once lived. The temple had been built in 1912 by a landowner; now the side rooms were given over to Ayurvedic and Sanskrit colleges. "Mr. Albert," the priest said, pointing to a cell on the left. It was entered from the veranda that rimmed the temple's paved courtyard. "That was his room."

Outside, there was a temple garden covering perhaps an acre, and adjoining it there was a workshop where, long abandoned, there stood a rusty horse-drawn forage cutter, like a big hedge trimmer. A sign said "Pilot Implement Company," but there were no other implements that I could see. I was steered to a building now used for handloom spinning. It was the original block office, bigger than the new building and with two floors. It was severely plain, however, and a half-dozen women sat on the floor inside; each cranked a small spinning machine. Finally we came round to the only unusual building I saw in Maheva. It was perfectly circular, like a brick snare drum fifty feet in diameter. This, I was told, was a warehouse built in the project's early days, and it was circular because it was built on the foundations of an indigo warehouse from the 19th century, before synthetic dyes killed indigo.

Living in a room adjoining this warehouse was an elderly man named Yogendra Singh Tripathi: tall, thin, dark, white-haired, with blue pajamas and a brown shawl over his shoulders. He was living here, he said, because his own house was down near the river: it was unsafe, threatened by bandits. I had been warned that Mr. Tripathi and his son were ardent supporters of the Hindu nationalists who were so worrying Indian Muslims. And Mr. Tripathi didn't mince words. The Israelis, he said, knew better than anyone else the true character of Muslims: great as India was, she was threatened by the determination of Muslims to dominate all other peoples. His nationalism spilled over to the Etawah Pilot Project, for he remembered not only Albert Mayer but Horace Holmes. He grew enthusiastic as he recalled, plain as day, Holmes standing up and telling the assembled farmers: "India is yours."

Many people in Maheva had connections to the Pilot Project. One afternoon I met two young men. One of them was Manaj Kumar Shukla, who explained that he was an unemployed civil engineer. Mayer had worked most closely with an

elderly farmer of that name; sure enough, it was this young man's grandfather. Manaj told me that his grandfather had been dead for many years; his several hundred acres had been taken by land reform, and his big old house had been turned over by the family to holy men.

But why had the Pilot Project faded into distant memory? Why hadn't it left behind the kind of organization that Mayer had intended and which Bowles and Dey had imagined would radiate across India?

The Pilot Implement Company had fallen flat. Near the circular warehouse there was an abandoned pea cannery; it, too, had failed despite initial success. Mr. Vyas--the man with the bulky sweater and beard stubble--had managed it for a while. What was he doing now? He was, he said, just a farmer. There was an appreciative murmur in the group at those words. I asked how much land he owned, and he quietly said 100 acres, or 50 times the block average. Everyone listened respectfully while he explained to me that mustard grown for oil was very profitable but that other crops, including wheat, were not. Later on, one of the officers said quietly that Mr. Vyas was "a farmer, not in service, so he is very wise."

Mr. Vyas heartily approved of community development. But then he *would* approve of it, wouldn't he? I mean that Maheva was visited in 1958 by Kusum Nair, the journalist who was touring India to write *Blossoms in the Dust*. With deliberate irony, her Maheva chapter is titled "A Decade of Development," and it begins with the story from the *Ramayana* of how nectar fell from heaven, revivifying some of the dead but leaving others untouched. "This is how it is with 'development,'" one farmer told Nair: "Even though it is designed for every one and offered equally to all only some benefit from it. That "some," of course, included Mr. Vyas. And what was the nectar? Block development officers in Uttar Pradesh have what is called "distribution authority." That's the official phrase, and it refers to the control of seed, fertilizer, and pesticide from the many warehouses in each block. The materials are not given freely but are sold at subsidized prices. Access is everything.

I asked Mr. Vyas if he found his village servant useful. He was silent. I tried again. "Do the BDO's stay here long?" "No," said Mr. Vyas. Why? The group had shrunk to an informal four or five, and everyone chuckled, Mr. Vyas included. The BDOs were transferred, someone explained, "for political reasons." With deliberate naiveté I asked for clarification and got another chuckle: the transfers occurred whenever the BDOs tried to resist requests from powerful people for improved seed, perhaps, or a pesticide. Mr. Vyas said nothing. A minute later we were back at my car. Mr. Vyas posed for my camera and assured me that I would always be welcome in Maheva.

So the Etawah Pilot Project had been co-opted, made into a farm-supply store for the rich. But it had happened with plenty of warning. Early on, Mayer

realized that many people wanted to join his staff simply because government jobs were a hallowed way of escaping peasant life. "We must fight against the possibility," he wrote, "that a bureaucratic and mercenary spirit may invade us." His own assistants were fighting for a larger project staff, simply in order to match the staffing and therefore the prestige of other government departments. And out in the field? In 1952, even as the national program was gearing up, Mayer wrote that the village servants in Etawah merely contacted "a few individuals of the middle or upper middle class.... [They confine] their work to this class." One of Mayer's staff people observed that some villagers were complaining that their village servants now "seem to work with mercenary motives, and not as missionaries as they used to. I agree that our last selections of Village Level Workers have not been good."

S. K. Dey, the administrator who took over the program in 1952, realized that everything depended on the village-level workers. They had to be "the first aid man in all fields of rural development--fields such as agriculture, animal husbandry, public health, village industries, cooperation..., and rural engineering. He is a multi-purpose man trained over a period of eighteen months in special institutions set up exclusively for the purpose." But it was never so. Another of the people involved early in the national program recalls that "our colleagues looked at us as fools. They used to say, you are gazetted, yet you are working in the villages, why?" And another man remembers that by the time the program went national "you forgot the farmer, you forgot the villager, you did what you were told. You gave the result on that which was expected because the first need was to please the higher-ups and somehow show the result. The programs were only on paper and the whole thing became a big game."

Astonishingly, Nehru himself identified the program's Achilles heel at the very outset. It happens that Chester Bowles returned to India during the 1960s for a second stint as ambassador, and in a memoir covering those later years he adds a crucial detail that he had omitted from the earlier account. Only in this second book do we learn that Nehru had been unenthusiastic when Bowles had proposed taking community development national. Nehru, Bowles tells us then, had replied that 'it was impractical in India on a large scale since the educated young people were unlikely to respond. Etawah, he thought, was a special case.

Why, then, had Nehru capitulated? Bowles explains that he told Nehru that he "was surprised that a man with Nehru's commitment both to democratic economic progress and to young people should react so negatively, and I said so." This was Cold War hardball, disguised none too subtly; it was a test of Nehru's commitment to the United States. And Nehru went along, with the predictable collapse of the idealism felt by the early village-level workers. As Horace Holmes told an interviewer some years later, "There was tremendous pressure on the U.S. side to use up the monies and to get more."

Perhaps Bowles speaks more freely in his second memoir because by then the whole strategy of agricultural development in India had shifted away from community development to the straightforward stimulation of agricultural production. An "intensive agricultural development program" had been launched with \$15,000,000 from the Ford Foundation. It aimed to provide a package of improved seeds and fertilizers and pesticides to those districts able to adopt them quickly. (It was this "package program" that brought to the Godavary Delta the Mr. Freeman whom Narayana Raju remembered.) Bowles supported the new program, but the results were poor, partly because of the seemingly inevitable political pressure to dilute the program through expansion and partly because staff were rotated too quickly. Yet the program's timing was impeccable, for its last years coincided with the introduction of high-yielding varieties and some of the most spectacular production increases the world has ever seen.

And community development? Until Nehru's death in 1964, the Community Development Ministry lingered on. Dey was still in charge, dealing now with Nehru's successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri. Shastri told him that he knew that "Jawaharlal had unquestioned faith in these institutions. I must confess that I do not have the same faith in the ability of the common people to guide and regulate themselves for many decades to come."

Shastri didn't want to move hastily, and the move to axe the ministry was postponed until Indira Gandhi's time. She had no such hesitation. Dey writes that he was transferred without warning to the Ministry of Mines and Metals: "When out of consternation I virtually woke ... [Mrs. Gandhi] up at her house, she was visibly embarrassed. With regrets she insisted, I must continue as she felt convinced I could impart life even to stones." Dey goes on to describe the agriculture minister of that time as "a great protagonist of centralisation and of everything being controlled from Delhi." This was the influential C. Subramaniam, who on his own initiative had imported from Mexico the new wheat seed for the Green Revolution. It was Subramaniam who saw to it, finally, that the Ministry of Community Development was merged into his own Ministry of Food and Agriculture. With the merger, Dey continues, Subramaniam "had what his mind and heart had been after." The block system remained, but it was nothing more than an input-delivery system.

And that is the story of community development in its Indian phase. I will look at it again later, in Bangladesh and Pakistan today; here, let me add only two anecdotes.

Back in the days of its Ford Foundation support, the Allahabad Agriculture Institute had provided extension services to a village called Serangapur. I paid a visit and found that the extension office in the village was now a public

school run by the institute. Extension services were still provided, however, by a young and energetic institute staffer named Robinson Robin.

We visited the school together. Younger boys and girls sat on the floor of their bare classrooms, but desks were provided for the teenage students. They were all girls. Their parents would not send them to the public high schools of Allahabad, which are residential and, therefore, expensive.

The whitewashed walls of the classrooms used by these older girls had simple anatomical diagrams and a world map; the girls, hair braided and pinned up in loops, wore neat white blouses and pink jumpers. They were studying civics, "democracy" in fact. A girl defined it for me as a land with many people. Perhaps the difficulty was in language, but there was no problem when I asked how many watched television nightly. Half raised their hands. What did they watch? Not the news but the soap opera that came after it. And what was the soap? It was apartment life in big-city India, and it was introduced by a whole string of advertisements. One night I made a list of the ads: in uninterrupted order for cola, toothpaste, Band-Aids, chewing gum, drain cleaners, mango candy, shoe polish, and something called "candy chocolate."

Close to the Serangapur school, Robinson and I met a villager standing in front of his house on the unpaved main village lane. The facade was perhaps 50 feet long on each of its four sides. Pantiles covered the whole roof.

The house was so impressive that I asked if I could enter, and we came through the narrow doorway, which led into a low and narrow front room running the whole length of the facade. The walls were of partly mudded-over brick, and the ceiling exposed the roof tiles through a wooden supporting frame. Other than bits of green fodder on the floor, there was nothing in the room. It was, I realized, the family barn, where the owner kept his one water buffalo.

The barn led through a central doorway into a higher room, more neatly mudded and with a two-tone treatment on the walls--light above, dark below. But this room, too, though clean, was almost empty. It had only a clothes line and a clay vessel as big as a water heater. It was filled with grain. Unlike the barn, this room was subdivided: a fourth of it at one end was walled off from the rest. The power was off and I could see nothing, but a flash camera eventually revealed a bedroom with a traditional string bed, covered with neatly folded bedding. The room was tiny and had no other furniture except a padlocked metal trunk. Clothes hung from hooks on the walls; so did a few calendars with flamboyant religious motifs and, above them and near the exposed beams, four family photos in a crooked frame.

The empty room outside the bedroom opened into an unpaved courtyard perhaps 30 feet square. A well was in one corner and a very modest brick planter was in the middle. Rooms opened on the side to my right, but they,

too, were so dark that I could see nothing. A camera flash revealed, weeks later, that the mud walls of the room were extraordinarily clean but that the room contained almost nothing except a couple of storage vessels and a few metal dishes and implements. They also contained, hidden in the darkness, two women and a girl.

During the 1960s, the village lands had been rearranged in single pieces so each owner got back approximately the same amount and quality of land he owned previously, though now arranged so that he didn't have to spend hours walking from one parcel to another. The general experience in Serangapur had been that the larger owners did better than the smaller ones; the smaller ones at least were the ones who expressed dissatisfaction. One reason is that the larger owners were now able to install pumps and irrigate their land, but the smaller owners did not have enough land to support such an investment. The man whose house I was visiting, for example, bought irrigation water from a neighbor with enough land to justify a pump.

Robinson and I went out to the fields and saw some of those pumps. One fed water into concrete-lined distribution channels that used siphons to pass under cart tracks. We met up with a farmer who was careworn but only in his early forties, I think. He was growing a field of vegetables. He had been having problems with some kind of insect. Robinson had offered advice. He had also suggested that the farmer transplant his rice in lines. Did the farmer now do so?

It was a leading question, because extension agents in India have for a long time advocated this way of planting rice. (It's often called the "Japanese method," for no good reason other than a desire on the part of extensionists to make it sound impressive.) But this farmer, like Indian farmers generally, have stuck with random transplanting. The farmer explained that Robinson had indeed told him to do line planting because it made weeding easier. But, he continued, the people he hired to do his transplanting didn't like line planting and demanded four times as much money for doing it instead of random transplanting. I looked at Robinson and chided him about not listening to the farmers. But he insisted on going by the book: the farmer could make the necessary calculations and decide whether or not line planting made sense.

At least Robinson was honest. I say this because I asked the farmer about the local village-level worker, who was supposedly doing the same work that Robinson was doing. The farmer grew indignant at his very mention. Why? Robinson smiled and told a story about his own dealings with this man. The villagers had wanted some service, Robinson had helped them obtain it, and the village-level worker had come to him to complain angrily. Complain? Yes, Robinson, he said, because the village-level worker was in the business of providing that same service in exchange for 2,000 rupees. Thanks to Robinson, he would never get that money from these farmers.

So much for the debased relic of Albert Mayer's experiment.

Back in Etawah town, I was talking with the district's chief development officer. He was young, handsome, and intelligent, a member of the elite Indian Administrative Service. He had never heard of Albert Mayer or Frank Brayne, but he told me that I might be interested in a universal-literacy program he was running. Village women were the chief target. The program was most interesting, he said, because the teachers were all volunteers. Really? Well, politicians had been asked to participate, but they had quickly dropped out. Local teachers, on the other hand, were volunteering their spare time. Volunteering? Well, yes, although their willingness to participate was noted on their annual evaluations.

And what kind of result was the program getting? Things were coming along satisfactorily, he said. The chief obstacle was the resistance of upper-caste women who declined to mix with lower castes. I asked how he handled the situation. He smiled and said "I take them by the hand and pull them into the group." No doubt it helped that he himself was a Brahmin. I almost asked if he told men coming into his presence to remove their earrings.

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