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Small Holdings.

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Those of us who are employed in the Agricultural Department are often asked to state how many acres of land would be necessary to make farming a business concern. People generally are inclined to think that to run a farm on business lines they should possess large areas of land. To such an enquiry the reply is generally indefinite, as it depends upon various factors like the kind of farming they wish to adopt, the nature of soil, possibilities for irrigation, fertility of land and so on. In the case of wet lands we generally think in acres, while in the case of dry lands perhaps in tens or scores of acres.

The generality of cultivators that we daily meet have lands which are not often economic holdings. By an economic holding we mean a sufficient area of land that would keep the owner and his family in reasonable comfort. "Reasonable comfort" does not include the possession of a motor car or a palatial building. Many cultivators make their living by farming not because they find it makes them

financially affluent, but because they have inherited land, and so must somehow or other cultivate it.

Yet one sometimes comes across certain classes of cultivators who make their living from small holdings. It is interesting to see how such people can make them economic and appear for all intents and purposes to be above want.

Not long ago I came across such small holdings near Madanapalli in Chittoor District. There is a certain class of people locally called "Koorakulavandlu" who correspond to the florists in other parts of the world. These are able to make 20—25 cents of lands produce much more than 10 or 15 acres of dry lands generally do. These people take possession of fairly good lands in and round the town in which there are a number of "Doruvu" wells. They cultivate various kinds of flowers, like Jasmine, Chrysanthemums and Marigolds and sweet scented leaves like Davanum and Maruvam, and vegetables like radish, brinjals and a dozen varieties of greens; this last branch of their occupation seems to give them the name of their profession, for in Telugu "Koorakulu" means greens.

I took the opportunity of going into the economics of their profession and for this reason I enquired of some of these people and visited several houses in which they live. I was agreeably surprised to find that there were indications of comfortable living. I could see pictures on the walls of their little rooms, silver ornaments of their women scattered and even a few articles of modern furniture could be seen; in fact it was beyond doubt that their standard of living appeared to be very much better than that of the average cultivators that were in the village. I was very glad to learn that they have no debts, although some of the men do indulge themselves in an occasional drink. Some of the men are able to read and write. The reason for this state of things is not far to seek. I saw both men and women at work and I found that they all had hard work to do. Nature in turn recompensed them by giving them strong and healthy bodies. While women were engaged in pot watering, men were busy in digging with mattocks and crowbars. A rake, a few hand-hoes and mud-pots completed their inventory of dead stock.

One possessing 20 cents distributed his holding as follows and obtained an annual income as noted against each.

Variety.	Area in cents.	Value in Rupees.
A. Jasmines (2 varieties)	4	60
B. Chrysanthemums (2 varieties)	4	30
Davanam and Maruvam	4	50
Greens (12 varieties)	4	35
Vegetables	4	65

Cents 20 Rs. 240 or Rs. 1,200 ₹ acre.

Bartering of grain was usually resorted to, so that it not only satisfied their immediate wants, but fetched better prices. This gave him Rs. 20 a month for his family which included his wife and 2 children. This particular individual said he could save some money from this for festival occasions.

This is only one instance of how people can make even very small areas of land pay by personal work and supervision.

I learnt afterwards that a similar practice is found in a village near Vellore, but unlike Madanapalli the women of Vellore do not seem to take part in lifting water. A similar practice exists, I believe, in many other places. For example, the Roman Catholic Christians in Mangalore are another instance, but I believe their drink to which they are very badly addicted is their curse, which keeps them in continual poverty.

My object in writing this short article is to impress upon my young readers that if simple village folk can make economic holdings of a few cents of land, what endless opportunity there is for educated young men possessing technical training to make small holdings bring them reasonable returns, instead of attempting to sink a large outlay in the purchase of extensive areas, and of live and dead stock. In this latter case any mistake due to inexperience will result in enormous loss besides being a bad example for others who follow. Plain living, practical knowledge and personal supervision are the 3 'R's' that an agriculturist should learn to make his farming pay.

If these are learnt I am sure many a young man would find a useful and lucrative occupation even in such small holdings instead of being led away by the present craze for appointments either in Government or Private service.