



English rendering of PM's address at Sahkar Sammelan on the occasion of birth centenary of Laxmanrao Inamdar on 21 September, 2017

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All the dignitaries present here who have come from different parts of the country and have been associated with the cooperative movement.

Along with the celebrations on the occasion of the birth centenary of Laxmanrao Ji Inamdar Ji, you people are also going to have a comprehensive deliberation throughout the day to find the ways to provide more momentum to this cooperative movement, to provide new energy and find the ways to collectively solve the problem of the common man while maintaining the sensitivity towards the society and also to find the solutions of the problems through cooperation and cooperatives.

Our country is prolific in producing great souls. There is infinite series of men in every period, in every region who lived for the society and who gave something or some other thing to the society during their lifetime.

There is no period in the history, and even today there is no part of the land where we can't see the people who are dedicated to the society. There are several people who during their tenure become the topic of discussion among the people due to TV, due to news papers, due to the publicity and also due to the honors and recognition given to them; and since they become a topic of discussion so sometimes they appear larger than life. However, this is such a country which has a very large pool of those people who never make it to the headlines of news papers, those who never appear on the glittering television screen. They never receive the applause or recognition or awards. But they dedicate their lives like a silent worker, like one lamp lighting another and then lighting thousands of lamps in the similar manner, they lead their lives in this manner by sacrificing, by dedicating their bodies and lives for the ideals, for the values. The value of their services to the country is no less despite them being an unknown face. Vakil Saheb was one such person.

Today, some may wonder that we never heard of his name and you people are celebrating his birth centenary. I admit that you might not have heard the name but precisely that was the most unique thing about him. By keeping oneself in the backdrop; and I believe that this is the first formula for the success of cooperatives to keep oneself away from these things as much as possible while putting people ahead by working together, this is the most important formula for the cooperatives.

He dedicated his life in development of people; he found this thing as a way for the development of the nation. It's my good fortune that I got the opportunity to spend a big part of my life with him. I spent several years of my youth under his direction. And that is why his life was constant source of inspiration for me. And when I was writing a book on his life; it was around 25-30 years ago.

And I was surprised when I looked at his life closely though I had lived with him, I had lived with him for several years. But there were several things that became known only after his death, so it was a good example of this thing that how he had lived his life. He worked as a gem of this great tradition of leading a humble lifestyle while making a constant effort to avoid limelight for the growth of his colleagues, to strengthen their capabilities, and to give strength to an idea.

There will be several programmes related to the centenary year. The cooperative movement will get a new strength. But today when we are moving ahead in the context of his contribution to the cooperative movement on his birth centenary then you are going to deliberate this issue throughout the day. You are going to discuss the best global practices in the field of cooperatives.

How we can move ahead in the field of agriculture through cooperatives? How to double the income of our farmers by 2022? What are the good things that we should adopt and what are the bad things that we must shun to mould our agriculture, to mould our rural life, as per the requirement of a modern India, how to prepare them in that direction of development? Now this is not possible that while the cities develop but we leave behind the villages. A balanced development is required. Equal opportunities for growth are required. And collective working is the fundamental for balanced growth and for equal opportunities. Shortcomings emerge in the systems due to passage of time. Some systems become time barred.

Every person in the field of cooperatives should keep reflecting on these issues. In case, this understanding develops in us that cooperative is a structure, it's a legal system, it is something that has been created under some rules, under a constitutional framework and if we fit ourselves in that framework then we will automatically become a cooperative. I think it will be a big mistake.

It's such a big country. Systems are required, rules and structures are required, and do's and don'ts are also required, this is an essential thing. But cooperatives don't work that way, cooperative is a spirit, it's not a system, it's an spirit. And values are important for this spirit that is why Inamdar Ji used to say this thing several times that without values there can't be a cooperative.

Today, sometimes it feels that whether that spirit has been lost somewhere in the system or not? Can we get a bigger inspiration than Vakil Saheb to revive, to reenergize the spirit of cooperative? And, the more strength we will give to the spirit of cooperative, so if there is a flaw in the system then perhaps that flaw will be rectified.

In our country, the village has been the basis of the entire cooperative movement. But we cannot deny that when the world of urban cooperatives started to develop under the same rules and regulation, particularly in the banking sector, that too in urban sector, then the kind of changes that took place, when the systematic breakdown started to happen then the sphere of

apprehensions and suspicion continued to expand. Even today, some kind of sacredness can be felt in the cooperative movement associated with rural life.

Even farmers feel that this is the right path for him and the people those who have been investing their time in cooperative movement for this thing they also feel that they have been doing something for the poor farmer, for the village through this thing. So you people are going to discuss all these things today. I have a small topic in my mind that I want to share with you people, I hope that you will certainly discuss that.

There have been several problems of Indian farmers, but if we look at this thing that our farmer purchases at a retail rate and sells at a wholesale rate. Can this thing be reversed, that he purchases at a wholesale rate and sells at a retail price? Then nobody would be able to exploit him. No middleman will be able to take advantage of him. Those people who have studied the dairy industry, the cooperative dairy, then please mark this thing that it's unique in the sense that under that system the farmer purchases and sells at the wholesale rate. Look, this uniqueness is fundamental in the success of dairy industry that farmer sells and purchases at the wholesale rate. Why? Earlier if was in the business of producing milk then he used to sell one litre milk to each of the 10 households, today, he goes to one collection centre to sell that same 10 litre of milk, it means that he sells in the wholesale market. And if he makes purchases then this too is being done through the dairy, the food for his livestock, the medicines for them and if he needs to take care of his livestock then all these facilities are collectively provided to the entire village.

And as a result of this thing, he continued to get some or some other benefits from the dairy, he was protected and it became a means for additional income. And in every other sector he has one difficulty. Look, if he sells the milk to the private sector at the wholesale rate then he would not have this kind of income. It became the basis of his income as it was the cooperative sector. Can we launch such a cooperative movement, one is already there as per the tradition. Earlier there were five cooperatives, these are being run by those people, I will show them, I will create the sixth one. There is a new form of cooperative. If these five have been running, let them run. But there are 10 such areas where no one has done anything and can we solve the problems of those sectors through cooperative, can I do it? There are plenty of such areas which have been untouched by cooperatives. And if they have been touched by cooperatives then there is an intense competition, if it is sugar, if it is milk then there will be a lot of competition. It's a natural thing that wherever there is some benefit then there will be competition. However, there are plenty of sectors where an entire generation will have to dedicate itself then only the cooperative will be strengthened.

Can we inspire a new generation in the cooperative movement with a new spirit, particularly, to fundamentally transform the rural life? Cooperative movement completely suits the disposition of our country.

It's not a borrowed idea; it's completely suitable to our fundamental way of thinking, to our fundamental values. And therefore it's very natural that it flourishes here. You don't have to inject yourself for this thing. All the other systems, if we adopt them, they are borrowed systems, and there is some resistance due to foreign element. It's a part of our natural, routine system and we can do it collectively.

For example, today, as we have been using Neem coated urea. Farmers have benefited immensely from this thing, and the struggle to get urea has diminished because of this. But the collection of Neem legume for coating of the urea, extraction of oil after its collection and then supply of that oil to the urea factory; all this have become a new big thing. And if our village women form the cooperative societies and the Neem which is required for this Neem coating, if they only collect legume from those areas, from the forests where Neem trees have been found then it can open a new sector of entrepreneurship, a new cooperative can be started.

I regularly tell to all my friends in the dairy industry that you encourage the farmers for raising the livestock but we should also insist, we should also emphasise on bee keeping, we should bring about a revolution in the field of honey, we should bring about a sweet revolution in the country. This honey revolution can be brought about through cooperatives. Honey, as the farmer keeps the livestock, as he is engaged in the milk production, similarly he can pick 50 bees and he can easily increase his income by 1.5 to 2 lakh rupees per annum. And the dairy that collects the milk can also collect the honey, they can collect the honey. And as the milk is processed in the dairy, honey should also be processed, it has a market. If the chemical wax sells for 100 rupees a kilo then bee was sells for 400-450 rupees per kilo, there is a huge demand. There is a huge market in India itself but our farmers are not part of it even today. And there are hundreds of species of bees and it also benefits the crops immensely. And honey bee works like an ambassador, acts like a cattle engager for those people who have been working in the field of horticulture. I mean to say that there are plenty of new areas, how do we move forward in those areas?

Our brothers and sisters from the fisherman community who live in the coastal areas; their work halts for almost five months in a year due to weather, it's dangerous to go out in the sea during the rainy season therefore it is being stopped. But the cultivation of sea-weed is not becoming popular in our country. If our fisherman brothers start cultivating sea-weeds on our sea shores through the cooperative movement then it's laboratory proven thing that it is a much sought after basic material for the pharmaceutical industry. Suppose that you don't get the market for the sea-weed, it has life cycle of 45 days, in the sea, sea-weeds become ready for harvest after 45 days and you can harvest its crop after every 45 days. And you can harvest the crop of sea-weed everyday if you raise 45 sea-weed farms under the sea. And even if you don't do anything else then you can just extract its juice and spray that juice in the field. So it can be a very big market of preserving the soil through the use of sea-weed juice. You don't have to do much, it doesn't require any hard work. Through cooperative movement, can we open this opportunity for our fisherman brothers living in the coastal areas whose work stops for nearly five months, and women folk of whose family are available for this work day and night? I mean to say that cooperative movements in the country can bring about big changes in our rural economy through these small things.

I would like to call upon our friends from the field of cooperative movement those who are present here today that they should publicise this movement even more, that they will rope in more and more people with them and in the true sense of the word our cooperative movement, in the equal partnership, should be used for the growth of the common man while protecting his interest as per the sentiments that Vakil Saheb attached to the cooperative movement, as per the values that he had attached to the cooperative movement, as per the kind of sensitivity that he had called upon to be attached to the cooperative movement and as per those fundamental elements and those fundamental values.

With this hope only, and while having the sacred memories of Vakil Saheb, I convey my best wishes to all of you. Thank you.

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