



सत्यमेव जयते

# **ICA XXX CONGRESS**

**at**

**Tokyo (Japan)**

**27-30 October, 1992**

*Speech of :*

**DR. BAL RAM JAKHAR**

Minister of Agriculture

Government of India

**&**

Leader of Indian Delegation

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Speech of  
DR. BAL RAM JAKHAR,  
Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture,  
Government of India,  
at the ICA Cooperative Congress  
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Mr. President, Excellencies and Fellow Cooperators,

At the outset, may I convey very warm greetings to all of you on behalf of Indian Cooperative Movement and Government of India. It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to address and to share my thoughts on Cooperation with this galaxy of cooperators from different parts of the world. I also express my deep appreciation of the efforts of the Japanese Cooperative Movement to extend warm hospitality to Indian delegation.

2. This Congress is a landmark in the history of the International Cooperation. It is for the first time that the ICA Congress has its venue in Asia in Tokyo. I understand that Congress is proposing basic structural changes for itself. This Congress is also important for it has one of its themes the basic values of cooperatives.

3. Cooperation in India has been an intrinsic part

of Indian culture. Our ancient scriptures Vedas and Puranas have very clearly emphasised the need and importance of Cooperation for socio-economic development of people.

4. The pioneers of economic thought in India, developed many concepts and principles which in their nature and substance suggest a cooperative way of life.

5. After independence cooperation has been adopted as an important instrument of economic development especially for the welfare of small farmers and weaker sections of the community. Our first Prime Minister, Late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru regarded Cooperatives as one of the pillars of democracy. To him cooperatives were much more than merely economic organisations. They were visualised as vibrant institutional framework to promote social justice. Every successive economic plan of the country specified the role of cooperatives as institutional vehicle for socio-economic transformation of the country particularly of rural India.

6. Today cooperatives have emerged as a very strong economic force committed to provide services to our people particularly the farmers, artisans and other weaker sections of the community for their socio-economic upliftment. Cooperative sector consists of 0.35 million cooperative societies of all types with a membership of 160 million and working

capital of Rs. 7,00,000 million. The cooperatives have a nation-wide spread and federal structure. It is a matter of great satisfaction that impact of cooperatives is perceptible in all segments of our economy. Cooperatives have covered all the villages and are meeting most of the requirements of rural people including production credit, marketing, agro-processing, consumer needs, post-harvest support to the farmers etc. The share of cooperatives in the field of agricultural credit is nearly 45 per cent. Similarly in respect of distribution of fertiliser they account for 35% of the total distribution of fertiliser in the country. Cooperatives are playing a major role in marketing of agricultural commodities such as foodgrains, jute and cotton. In the field of agro-processing, cooperatives have played a very important role. They are producing 60% of the total sugar production and commanding 11% of total spindleage in the textile sector. 58% of total handlooms are within cooperative fold.

7. Despite its size and importance and the large network of cooperatives in the country, the cooperative sector is facing some problems. These are the weak organisational structure at the base level; over-dependence on government, inactive membership, lack of professionalisation etc. in the competitive market economy, which has been ushered in through a number of measures for liberalising economy, the cooperatives would have to prepare themselves to face the challenges of emerging competition.

8. Another dimension of the problems faced by the cooperatives is articulation of cooperative values in their functioning. In this context, therefore, I appreciate the timely step taken by the ICA to initiate global discussions on basic cooperative values. The most important challenge which the cooperatives face in the modern competitive world is how far the existing principles of cooperation are helpful to cooperatives to compete in the free market economy. Should cooperatives follow the same business practices which are followed by the private sector? Should they have the same attitude towards profitability? What should be their attitude towards society as a whole? These are some of the important issues to be kept in mind when we deliberate upon the basic values in Cooperation.

9. Historically speaking, Cooperation was borne out of the struggle of the weaker sections to save themselves from the exploitation of vested interest. Thus basically the cooperatives provide bargaining capacity to the individuals against the exploitative elements in the society. Viewed in this context, caring for others and honesty of purpose become the basic values of cooperation. Besides democracy and self-reliance are other important elements that make up basic cooperative values. The cooperatives have to be sponsored, managed and controlled by the members themselves. Value is a complex phenomenon. The basic values are those which are above time and place. They are infinite.

10. We have taken a number of steps in India for promoting and preserving values within the cooperatives in the true sense of the term. A new cooperative policy has been formulated, which emphasises that cooperatives shall be promoted as instruments to harness and develop peoples' creative power for decentralised economic development in order to maximise productivity. The policy visualises a catalytic and supportive role of the government to provide encouragement to cooperatives to grow as self-reliant grass-root democratic institutions owned/managed and controlled by members for their economic and social betterment operating their business on cooperative principles. As a part of this policy, a model cooperative law has been prepared by the government. It aims at promoting and preserving cooperative values by removing the government control and political influence.

11. The issues relating to environmental protection have direct link with economic and social development, as needed resources for development are drawn from environment. Present situation points towards the fact that natural resources have been exploited without giving serious thought to its long term side effects. Industries have been expanded, without proper and adequate anti-pollution measures. There is urgent need to protect the environment, making the atmosphere pollution free. Cooperatives having a very wide network from village to national level can play a very important role in the protection of environment. They may not only educate their

millions of members, but also execute projects at various levels. The active involvement of the people is most essential for successful implementation of any programme of environmental protection. Cooperatives being the people's organisation can be harnessed for this purpose. I appreciate the initiative taken by the ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Region in drawing the attention of cooperatives in this region to their role.

12. Concluding my remarks, may I emphasise the political and economic order in the world is fast undergoing a change. Because great deal of technological and material advancement, regional imbalances in the different countries is becoming more pronounced and maintenance of social cohesion has become one of the greatest global problems. The cooperatives have to face these social challenges apart from the challenges of market economy. I would like to emphasise that mere expansion and diversification of cooperative movement in terms of commercial operations is not enough. What is needed is the social harmony. The cooperatives with their intrinsic philosophy and values not only provide institutional framework for implementing developmental programmes but generate high values in human beings for creating a society, a just society that will be good for nation and the world community at large.

13. I personally, and my Government extend support to the ICA activities in this region. They have



positive and significant impact on cooperatives. The two Conferences of Ministers of Cooperation held at Sydney and Jakarta were participated and supported by Government of India. I hope this Congress will provide guidance for the accelerated growth of cooperative movement all over the world, particularly in developing countries.

14. I sincerely thank the I.C.A. for giving me the honour to be the special guest at this great event. I also thank the Government of Japan and the Japanese Cooperative Movement for the excellent arrangements.

Thank you very much.