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CO-OPERATION & RURAL WELFARE IN INDIA

BY

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THACKER SPINK & Co.,
CALCUTTA AND SIMLA.

1929

Published by :
J. CHAPLIN of
THACKER SPINK & Co.
3, Esplanade, E., CALCUTTA.

XMO6Y31.2

F9

Price Rs. 3/-

8404

Printer : S. C. MAJUMDAR
SRI GOURANGA PRESS
71/1, Mirzapur Street, Calcutta

8404

1 MAI 1990

To
RAI BAHADUR DURGA PRASAD, M.A.
Governor of
The Bihar & Orissa Co-operative Federation Ltd.
and
Registrar of
Co-operative Societies, Bihar & Orissa
This Book
is respectfully dedicated by the Author
as a token of
His respect and admiration for the
Great Service
He is rendering to the Cause of Rural Welfare
as
The Leader of the Movement in this Province.

FOREWORD

BY

Rt. Hon. SIR HORACE PLUNKETT, Bart.,
K.C.V.O., F.R.S., LL.D.

I am asked by the writer of this book to contribute "a few words by way of a Foreword." He is kind enough to say that my doing so will "enhance the value of the book", a statement I might hesitate to believe ; but he compels compliance by assuring me that this slight service "will give a great impetus to the cause we all hold so dear."

Why I personally welcome the book can be easily told. It is a sermon on the text *Better Farming, Better Business, Better Living*—words used by me many years ago when, at President Roosevelt's request I suggested to him a fitting formula for his Country Life Policy. Little did I foresee either the number or the quality of the thinkers on the modern problem of rural life to whom these simple words would appeal. Professor Mukherjee has earned the gratitude of his fellow-workers in the field of rural social endeavour by interpreting them in their application to the diverse human and material conditions of agricultural India. In effect he tells his countrymen and all now striving for their welfare that the centre of the problem is

Better Business and that Better Business is Co-operation.

Such, it seems to me, is the position which Professor Mukherjee takes up at the outset and sustains throughout his book. While I read it I wondered whether he recalled the declaration of H. M. King George V in 1911; "If the system of co-operation can be introduced (into India) and utilised to the full, I foresee a great and glorious future for the agricultural interests of the country." If I were to single out from the innumerable applications of this fundamental truth to Indian conditions contained in this book the two which impressed me most, I should give chief prominence to the writer's emphasis on "the custom-based foundations" of the village communities of India, now rapidly disintegrating. The spirit of these, he points out, was entirely co-operative, and it is the task of all working on the problems of rural life in India to keep this spirit alive, shaping it in a form suited to the changed economy of the country.

Other writers, such as Henry W. Wolff and Sir Frederick Nicholson, have surveyed agricultural co-operation in Europe from Ireland to Russia. Mr. Mukherjee's survey of the West is just as wide, but it may be doubted whether any other Indian investigator has applied the experience gained to such a variety of situations in his own country.

To the outsider the book is extraordinarily informing and suggestive. It shows how co-

operative workers have special difficulties to face in every country. One of India's special problems is the illiteracy of the peasants. There we meet with hundreds of co-operative societies "where there is not a single member who is literate", and that is why Mr. Mukherjee devotes so much space to primary education, a subject which he has studied deeply in its relations to Indian rural life and on which he offers some of his most valuable suggestions.

I hope that the book will be widely read both by the people of India and their friends abroad. They will not be disappointed.

HORACE PLUNKETT,

The Horace Plunkett Foundation,
10, Doughty Street,
London, W.C. 1.

PREFACE

This little volume has developed out of lectures delivered from time to time at Agra, Motihari and Muzaffarpur. It is an attempt to draw the attention of all students of Rural Economics to the great services which Co-operation can render to the cause of Rural Welfare in India. The author has tried to apply to Indian conditions, Sir Horace Plunkett's great formula of Rural Reconstruction and it is his firm conviction that if this formula is persistently kept in view by the workers, their efforts will be crowned with success.

The author can not find words to thank the Rt. Hon. Sir Horace Plunkett Bart adequately for the great pains he has taken in going through the MSS and for the great honour he has done him by writing a Foreword.

The author has great pleasure in acknowledging with thanks the encouragement which his teacher Principal W. V. Duke, M.A., I.E.S., has invariably given him in his studies. He further offers his sincerest thanks to Mr. N. K. Roy, Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Orissa and Rev. J. Z. Hodge of Motihari for their suggestions and to Messrs. Sisir K. Mukherjee, M.Sc., and Salil K. Mukherjee for seeing the book through the Press.

He is very much indebted for valuable suggestions to the books of Dr. Howard, Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, the Hon. Mr. Ramadas Pantulu, Mr. F. L. Brayne, I.C.S., and of other workers in the field of Rural Economics.

B. B. M.