

CHAPTER TWO

THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

1. Introduction

Co-operation is one of the "economic miracles of the last century."¹ The principle of co-operation is as old as human society. It is the basis of domestic and social life. Co-operation means working together for the promotion of common ends or objectives. The term co-operation is derived from two latin words, 'co' meaning together and 'operari' meaning to work. Hence co-operation can be defined as a 'joint activity in pursuit of common goals.'

The application of co-operation in the economic field can be traced back to Industrial Revolution which took place in the U.K. during the second half of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries. It is an economic system which grew as a reaction to the evils of industrial revolution which gave rise to the concentration of wealth, mass poverty and degradation. Edwin G. Nourse has stated:

The movement grew out of the circumstances of the Industrial Revolution and was a reaction against early abuse or, at least, rigours of the capitalistic industrial system.²

H. Calvert defined co-operation as "a form of organization, wherein persons voluntarily associate together as human beings, on a basis of equality, for the promotion of the economic interests of themselves."³ Thus, a co-operative

is a voluntary form of organization. It is an association of human beings. It is organised on the basis of equality. Its objective is the economic interests of its members.

Paul Lambert defined a co-operative undertaking as, "a co-operative society is an enterprise formed and directed by an association of users, applying within itself the rules of democracy and directly intended to serve both its own members and the community as a whole,"⁴ Thus a co-operative is an enterprise. It is an association of users. The term 'user' has been used in the broad sense - not as a consumer. It applies the rules of democracy. It is intended to serve both, its own members and the community as a whole.

2. 2:1 History of Co-operative Movement in India

The British introduced co-operative movement in India mainly to remove the indebtedness of vast majority of agriculturists. The indebtedness of the majority of agriculturists was responsible for the deterioration of agriculture and the poverty of the people. It was also the cause of social disturbances during the second half of the nineteenth century. The poor farmers were harrassed by the rich money-lenders. The money-lenders charged high rates of interests and exploited the poor farmers. Due to indebtedness the farmers had to surrender their lands to the money-lenders. So, for

the economic betterment of the farmers the government of India introduced the 'Co-operative Credit Societies Act' in 1904. This Act was described as a 'turning point in economic and social history.'⁵ The objective of this Act, as stated in the preamble, "was to encourage thrift, self-help and co-operation amongst agriculturists, artisans and persons of limited means." This Act provided for the first legal frame-work for the co-operative movement in India.

Due to this Act of 1904, significant progress was made and large number of credit societies were formed during the initial period. But this Act did not give legal protection to societies formed for the said purposes other than credit. To remove the defects in the Act of 1904, another co-operative societies Act was passed in 1912. With the passing of this Act, the co-operative movement spread very rapidly. The number of societies, their membership and the amount of working capital increased steadily. "By the end of 1917-18 there were 23,741 agricultural societies and 1,451 non-agricultural societies. The membership of these societies was 8.5 lakhs and 2.04 lakhs respectively. The working capital of all the co-operative societies amounted to Rs. 760 lakhs."⁶

With the introduction of Reforms Act of 1919, co-operation became a provincial subject and was placed under the charge of a Minister. This was another landmark in the

history of this movement. Some of the provinces took initiative in expanding the movement. Bombay Province took a lead in this regard and passed a new Act in 1925. It was followed by other provinces which passed their own Acts during the latter years. Further, in 1935, Reserve Bank of India was established. The Reserve Bank started an Agricultural Credit Department. This was a remarkable landmark in the history of co-operation. Under the direction and supervision of Reserve Bank, the movement progressed on proper lines. The movement was diverted to various activities such as processing, marketing and distribution.

The period from 1938 to 1945 gives us an idea about a shift in emphasis from credit aspect of the cooperative movement to production and distribution functions of the co-operative societies. It resulted in increasing the number of consumers' co-operative societies, agricultural credit and marketing societies.⁷

At the end of June 1947, there were 1.39 lakh societies having a membership of 91 lakhs. The total working capital of the co-operative institutions amounted to Rs. 156 crores.⁸

2:2 Progress of Co-operative Movement After Independence

The progress of the co-operative movement in India before independence was rather slow. The co-operative movement occupied a rather insignificant position in the overall

economy of the country. But in spite of its limited spread the movement produced some dedicated people who built very admirable institutions. The mere fact that the movement could attract the devoted services of these pioneers showed that it had a vitality and idealism that could form the base of great activities.⁹

After independence the co-operative movement was accelerated and expanded. India accepted the concept of planned economic development and to work for a socialist pattern of society. The First Five Year Plan which started in 1950-51 described the co-operative movement as an indispensable instrument of planned action in a democracy. In this context the Planning Commission observes,

The co-operative form of organization can no longer be treated as only a species within the private sector. It is an indispensable instrument of planned economic action in democracy. Co-operation must, therefore, be an essential feature of the programmes for the implementation of the Five Year Plan, adopted at all levels of administration.¹⁰

At the end of the First Five Year Plan the number of co-operative societies rose to about 2,40,000 and the number of members to 17.62 million. The total working capital of the co-operative institutions amounted to Rs. 469 crores.¹¹

The Reserve Bank of India appointed a Committee to study the problem of rural credit. The 'All India Rural Credit Survey Committee' submitted its report in 1954 and made many recommendations to strengthen the co-operative movement. The Report of this committee was a landmark in the history of co-operative movement. The Report was accepted as a blue-print for the future development of the co-operative movement.

The co-operative policy for the second Five Year Plan (1956-61) was largely formulated on the basis of the recommendations of the Rural Credit Survey Committee. The importance attached to co-operative development in national planning can be judged from the fact that the financial outlay in the Second Plan for this purpose was of the order of Rs. 57 crores against an allocation of only Rs. 7.11 crores in the First Plan.

The Second Five Year Plan broadened the base and coverage of co-operation. During this period, the government contributed to the share capital of the co-operative societies and thus strengthened their capital base. Due to this step of government the marketing and processing co-operative societies were opened and strengthened. Due to this policy of government numerous co-operative sugar factories were started.

"An integrated programme of co-operative development was first drawn up during the Second Plan period. Earlier it was virtually restricted to the provision of credit, the movement was eventually extended to encompass other spheres of economic activity such as marketing, processing, warehousing, storage etc."¹² At the end of the Second Five Year Plan the number of co-operative societies rose to about 3.32 lakhs and the number of members to 342 lakhs. The total working capital of the co-operative institutions amounted to Rs. 1,312 crores.

The National Development Council in 1958 considered the role of co-operative movement in building the rural economy. It stated that Co-operative and Panchayat would be the primary agencies to carry out the community development programme. The Third Five Year Plan was chalked out accordingly and the policy was laid down by the 'National Development Council.' During the Third Plan (1961-66) also the co-operative movement was accorded a crucial role in implementing the schemes of economic development. It provided for Rs. 80 crores for the development of co-operation as against Rs. 34 crores in Second Plan.

At the end of the Third Five Year Plan there were about 1,92,000 active societies with a membership of 24.6 million.

In the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans higher targets were achieved in the co-operative movement. Co-operative activities were intensified. During the Fourth Plan period the introduction of the crop loan system, linking credit with marketing and processing and reduction of overdues, strengthening the resources of co-operative banks and societies were the important features of the co-operative movement. In the Fifth Plan emphasis was laid on the credit requirements of the small farmers and artisans. Stress was given to revitalise the village societies to make them strong.

In 1980, the Indian Co-operative movement completed seventy-five years of existence. The co-operative movement in India during the last seventy-five years has spread to ninety-eight per cent of villages and fifty per cent of families in India. There is enormous structural development. S. Bagavathi Muthu says,

The pyramid type of structural development in various spheres of co-operative movement - starting from the base of individuals forming the primary society and sloping to the pyramid top of National Federation by the successive affiliation of primary into Central, State and National federations - is a significant landmark in the history of co-operative movement after independence.¹³

2:3 Co-operative Processing

Processing of foodgrains and other agricultural

commodities is the most important stage in preparing them fit for ultimate consumption. Almost all the agricultural commodities have to undergo one or more stages of processing before they reach the consumer. If the processing activity is organised on a co-operative basis by the producers themselves they can get better return on their produce. The agricultural commodities like cotton, groundnut, tobacco, jute, coffee, paddy, wheat, sugarcane etc. must be processed before they are placed in the hands of consumers. The sugarcane has to be crushed and processed into sugar.

All these processes were in the hands of middlemen and businessmen. They made huge profits and exploited the farmers. Processing requires big capital investment and technical knowledge which the farmers lacked. By the middle of the 20th century the producers realised that they could undertake processing work on a co-operative basis. The establishment of sugar factories on a co-operative basis has opened a new chapter in the processing industry.

The role of the co-operative processing of agricultural commodities in the economic development of India is significant.

The beginning of agricultural co-operative processing in India dates back to 1917, when a co-operative cotton ginning unit was established in the Mysore State. A similar

beginning was made in Gujarat in 1921. For nearly four decades, co-operative processing of cotton was more or less confined to the areas of Karnatak and Gujarat.¹⁴

The involvement of the government in the co-operative sugar factories on a large scale began in 1954. But the idea of co-operative sugar factories was not unknown before 1954. Between 1933 and 1935 four co-operative sugar factories were established. The only factory that could survive after independence was the one at Eti koppaka in Andhra Pradesh.¹⁵ But the real credit for the co-operative movement in sugar industry goes to the Pravaranagar Co-Operative Sugar Factory established in 1948.

3. Sugar Industry in India

3:1 History

Sugar is known to Indians since the Vedic times. There are references of 'Sarkara' in 'Atharva Veda'. India is acquainted with the sugarcane and its products since ages. There are innumerable references to the sugarcane and sugar in the Hindu Puranas and Buddhist literature. Sugar and sugarcane have an important place in various sacred rites and rituals of Hindus and Buddhists. There are two references in Bible to sweet cane referring probably to the sugarcane.¹⁶

The art of making sugar was discovered in India between 4th and 6th centuries. Sugar was produced by a simple method. The cane was cut into pieces and crushed by heavy weight. The juice was boiled and stirred until solids were formed. These solids used to be of uneven sizes and shapes. This was called 'Sarkara'. The larger solids were called 'Khanda'. There is ample evidence to show that India was the original home of sugarcane and of the manufacture of sugar. Foreign travellers to India have written about honey in the wonderplant - the 'honey reed' - their description of the sugarcane. The Chinese Emperor Tai-Tsung (627-650 A.D.) sent his men to India to study the art of sugar-making. The knowledge of producing crude sugar went over to Persia from India. The sugarcane spread to North Africa and South Europe in the 9th and 10th centuries through the Arabs. It went to Java and Phillippines through the Chinese. In 11th century, the crusaders took sugarcane to France. From 11th century the commercial development and use of sugar became widespread in Europe. The sugar refineries were started in Germany, France and the U.K. in the 16th century. But the modern refining came into existence at the beginning of the 19th century in England.

India is the homeland of sugar and sugarcane, but the sugar industry on modern lines was developed by the Western

countries. The progress of sugar industry on modern lines was slow in India. The sugar industry started in India in 1791. But the progress was very slow. Indian sugar had to compete with the cheap sugar produced in Java. The Indian sugarcane did not have high sucrose content and the yield per acre was low. So Indian sugar could not stand in competition with the Java sugar. So, the government made some changes in the sugar tariffs in 1836. This attracted some West Indian and Mauritius planters to invest capital in India in the sugar industry. During this period sugar factories were started e.g., such as Messrs Parry and Company, the Aska Sugar Factory and Rosa Sugar Factory. These factories exist even today. The sugar industry in India could not grow rapidly due to low yield and low sugar content varieties of cane. To develop the sugar industry the Departments of Agriculture of Bombay and Madras provinces decided to do research and grow better varieties of sugarcane in 1894 and 1902 respectively. Hybrids had to be developed to suit the climatic and geographical conditions in India.

The Bombay Government established a sugarcane Farm at Manjari near Poona in 1894. Madras Government started a Farm at 'Samalkot' in Madras in 1902. On these farms various researchers like Mollison, J.B.Knight, Hadi, T.S. Venkatraman etc. worked. They developed the variety of cane fit for the

sub-tropical conditions. The Sugarcane Breeding Institution at Coimbatore developed numerous new varieties of sugarcane. These new varieties were supplied to the farmers in place of indigenous varieties. These new varieties increased the yield per acre and also the sugar recovery in the factories. This, in turn, gave good returns to the farmers.

The improved varieties of cane have slowly and steadily replaced the low yielding and poor quality indigenous canes. At present over 95% of the sugarcane area in the country is grown with improved varieties of cane.¹⁷

At the beginning of the 20th century large scale production of the white crystal sugar had started. Upto 1932-33 there were 31 sugar factories in existence.

In 1930-31, the sugar production in India was 3,11,000 tonnes. But India required sugar four times more than her production to meet her domestic needs. So large quantities of sugar had to be imported. This required large amount of foreign exchange. So, to study this problem the government of India appointed a Committee known as "Indian Sugar Committee." The committee came to the conclusion that conditions prevailing in India were quite favourable for the expansion of sugar industry and India could produce sufficient sugar to meet her needs. So the government felt that the Indian sugar industry must be protected and encouraged. In 1932 the Sugar

Industry Act was passed by the Indian Government. By this Act, heavy duties were imposed on the import of sugar into India. Now Indian sugar could compete with the Javanese imported sugar. This Act helped for the growth of sugar industry in India.

3:2 The Protection Period (1932-1951)

The Sugar Industry Act of 1932 declared sugar industry as a protected industry for 15 years. The duties levied on the imported sugar protected the sugar industry in India. This produced dramatic results. The sugar industry began to develop rapidly. It is clear from Table No. 2.1.

Table No. 2.1¹⁸

Particulars	1931-32	1936-37
1 No. of sugar factories	31	137
2 Acreage under cane	3.1 million	4.6 million
3 Production of crystal sugar	1,61,000	10,00,000

Within 4 years after the grant of protection, India became self-sufficient in respect of sugar. The production went on increasing till 1938-39 but during the war period production fell down a little.

3:3 Sugar Industry in Plan Period

Under the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) period the target of sugar production was fixed at 15 lakh tonnes against an actual production of 11.16 lakh tonnes in 1950-51. Therefore new factories were sanctioned to increase the production. Directions were given to increase the capacity of the existing plants. At the end of the First Plan the sugar industry achieved a record production of 18.9 lakh tonnes. The 2nd Five Year Plan (1956-61) also witnessed great expansion of sugar industry. In 1960-61 a record production of 30.29 lakh tonnes was noted. In the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) also there was phenomenal increase in sugar production with 35.10 lakh tonnes of sugar production in 1965-66.

The three years (1966-69) are called as holiday years. During these years a policy of partial control of sugar was followed by government. Due to this change in policy the farmers could get higher prices for sugarcane. This resulted in increase in area of cane plantation and with it sugar production also increased. The sugar production in 1968-69 reached a new height of 37.6 lakh tonnes.

The Fourth Five Year Plan 1969 to 1974 iterated the importance of sugar industry. In 1974-75 there were 247 sugar factories and produced 42 lakh tonnes of sugar in the year

1975-76.

Today India occupies a prominent place in the world in sugar production. India is the largest producer in the world. Sugarcane is a major cash crop in India.

4. Co-operative Sugar Industry in India

The beginning of co-operative sugar factories dates back to 1933, when the first co-operative sugar factory was established in United Provinces. Between 1933 and 1935 three more co-operative sugar factories were established at Thummapala, Etikoppaka and Vuyyuru in Andhra Pradesh. The only factory that could survive after independence was the one at Etikoppaka. It is the oldest sugar co-operative in India today. "This surviving sugar factory does not seem to have inspired the scheme of the co-operative sugar factories that was launched in 1954."¹⁹ The credit for the scheme should go to the Pravaranagar Co-operative Sugar Factory established in 1948.

The idea of the co-operative sugar factory gathered momentum after Second World War in Ahmednagar district in the then Bombay State. The Pravaranagar Co-operative Sugar Factory was registered on 31st December 1948 and it brought out the first bag of sugar on 31st December 1950. Thus the

idea of the first co-operative sugar factory after independence became a reality. This also marked the real beginning of the co-operative sugar factories in India. The Pravaranagar Co-operative Sugar Factory was not only financially a viable institution but as a co-operative also it proved to be an efficient, prudent and enlightened enterprise. It thus presented an inspiring example not only to the Bombay State but also to the country. It set the tone of the development of the sugar industry from 1954 onwards. It was a pilot experiment which proved its worth and which the country thought worthwhile to emulate. The Pravara venture, though encouraged by Government's active and positive support, was not solely dependent for inspiration on the Government. It had arisen out of a movement which had a strong foundation in the people's will.²⁰

The large scale movement of the co-operative sugar factories that was launched in 1954 had its origin in the decision of the planning commission to increase the output of the sugar industry in order to meet the increasing demand of sugar in the country. The Planning Commission had indicated its preference for "processing plants owned and managed by co-operative societies," supported by the State through grants of licences and other ways.

In 1954, the Government of India granted licences to 10 projects for the crushing season of 1956-57 in Bombay State, of which the Sankeshwar factory was one. The Sankeshwar factory was registered under the Bombay Co-operative Societies Act, 1925 on 10.9.1956. After the reorganisation of the states on 1 November, 1956, Sankeshwar factory was allotted to Mysore State. Prior to that it was merely registered, no other action was taken. Even the share capital was not contributed by Government. The progress of co-operative sugar industry is evident from the following table.

Table No. 2.2

Share of co-operative sugar factories in total production.²¹

Year	No. of sugar factories in operation		Sugar production (lakh tonnes)		Percentage of co-operative to total
	Co-operative	Total	Co-op.	Total	
1961-62	34	180	4.75	27.29	17.4
1966-67	55	200	6.62	21.51	30.8
1971-72	79	220	12.85	31.13	41.3
1976-77	116	270	23.13	48.40	47.8
1981-82	153	320	46.04	84.37	54.6

At the end of the year 1983, there were 200 licenced

co-operative sugar factories out of a total of 327 sugar factories.

A notable feature of the working of the co-operative sugar factories has been their increasing participation in the sugar export promotion programme of the country. In 1982 they exported 10 lakh tonnes of sugar. The co-operative sugar factories have also been showing interest in the development of sugar by-product industries such as alcohol, newsprint, chemicals, paper etc.

5. Co-operative Sugar Industry in Karnataka

The present State of Karnataka came into existence in 1957, though it was known at that time as Mysore State. Mysore State had emerged out of the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Committee in the year 1956. There was old Mysore State before 1957. Many Kannada speaking areas were out of old Mysore State. These were united and the Mysore State was created in 1957. Mysore State was established by merging the following areas.²²

- 1 Nine districts of old Mysore State,
- 2 Kodaga State which is known as Koorge and Madikeri at present,
- 3 Gulbarga, Bidar and Raichur districts from Hyderabad State,

- 4 Dharwar, Bijapur, Belgaum and Karwar (Now known as North Canara) districts and some talukas from Solapur district from old Bombay State,
- 5 South Canara (now known as Mangalore), and Bellary districts from Madras province.

Thus, Kannada speaking areas from different states were brought together and Mysore State was created which came to be known as Karnataka State since 1973.

The co-operative movement in Karnataka started along with the co-operative movement in India. The first co-operative society was established at Kanaginhall in Dharwar district in 1904.²³ In 1905, Mysore Co-operative Control Act was passed which led to the development of co-operatives in the old Mysore State. In fact, co-operative movement flourished in the old Bombay-Karnataka area.²⁴ After independence organisation of the co-operatives was taken as an important objective of planned economic development of the country. The same policy was adopted in Karnataka areas. The co-operative movement in Karnataka area got a new momentum after the reorganisation of states and the formation of new Mysore State.

During the First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) two important

steps were taken in the old Mysore State for the development of co-operatives -

- a. extension of co-operatives through the establishment of multi-purpose societies,
- b. giving financial assistance to agricultural co-operatives,

A meagre sum of Rs. 8.09 lakhs was spent on co-operation. Some progress was made in establishing co-operative credit and agricultural, marketing, housing and weaving co-operatives.

Outlay on co-operation was increased during 2nd Five Year Plan (1956-61) to strengthen the co-operative movement. During this period new Mysore State came in existence (1957). Rs. 261 lakhs were spent on co-operation. The important objectives were placed as follows:

1. To strengthen the economic, administrative and technical capabilities of co-operatives at all levels.
2. To develop agricultural, marketing and processing co-operatives through government assistance.
3. To broaden the base of co-operatives in rural economic activities through government assistance.

4. To provide proper training facilities to the co-operative staff.

Considering the importance of processing in agricultural field, it was decided to start co-operative processing units. Accordingly 32 processing units were registered, out of which 18 started functioning during this plan period. Eight co-operative sugar factories were registered, out of which 3 started production by the end of the Second Plan period. Hiranyakeshi Co-operative Sugar Factory, Sankeshwar, was one of them.

During the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66), Rs. 394 lakhs were spent on co-operation. During this period different types of co-operatives were developed. Seventy-three co-operative processing units were established as against a target of 43 units. Four co-operative sugar factories were given the financial assistance of Rs. 47 lakhs. During the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) Rs. 900 lakhs were allotted to develop co-operation. Some 172 co-operative processing units received financial help from the government. Ten co-operative sugar factories received financial assistance of Rs. 220 lakhs.

Thus, the co-operative processing units started increasing with the liberal financial help of government. The

growth of sugar factories in co-operative field started from 1960-61. Table No. 2.3 will show the progress of sugar factories in Karnataka.

Table No. 2.3

Progress of sugar factories in Karnataka²⁵

Year	No. of sugar factories in operation	
	Co-operative	Total
1950-51	-	4
1955-56	-	4
1960-61	3	8
1965-66	4	9
1970-71	6	11
1975-76	9	19
1980-81	13	23

In 1983, there were 28 licenced sugar factories in Karnataka, out of which 17 were co-operative, 8 private, and 3 in State sector. Out of the 17 co-operative registered co-operative sugar factories, 13 were already under production and 4 were under construction. Most of the 13 co-operative sugar factories working satisfactorily. They have

comprehensively affected the development of both the agriculture and the industry. They have played an important role in changing the rural life. Table No. 2.4 shows the place of Karnataka in sugar co-operatives in relation to India.

Table No. 2.4

Position of sugar co-operatives in Karnataka
and India²⁶

Items		India 1983	Karnataka 1983
1		2	3
1	No. of Registered co-operative sugar factories	200	17
2	No. of co-operative sugar factories under production	157	13
3	Yearly capacity of all factories (L.T.)	64.55	5.51
4	Yearly capacity of co-operative factories (L.T.)	33.74	3.09
5	Area under sugarcane	31,93,000 hectares	1,75,000 hectares
6	Total cane crushed by all factories (L.T.)	873.42	64.23
7	Total cane crushed by co-operative sugar factories (L.T.)	456.75	31.83
8	Sugar production by all factories (L.T.)	84.37	6.48
9	Sugar produced by co-operative factories	46.04	3.25

Table No. 2.4 contd.

1	2	3	
10	Average recovery of sugar by all factories	9.66	10.09
11	Average sugar recovery of co-operative factories	10.08	10.23
12	Consumption of sugar	55.00	2.82
13	Production of molasses of all factories	38.33	2.95
14	Production of molasses of co-operative factories	19.59	1.46

Almost all co-operative sugar factories in Karnataka have been established in rural areas. These factories have occupied the central place in the development of socio-economic aspect of rural life. The allied industries based on sugarcane have been increasing day-by-day. These effects demonstrate the importance of sugar industry in Karnataka.

The introduction of co-operative sugar factories in Karnataka has brought about an agricultural revolution, the results of which are an increase in the standard of living, development of educational facilities and an increase in

social and cultural services. In this chapter it is taken into consideration as to how the co-operative movement has created an impact on Karnataka.

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