INTRODUCTION

Though fifty years have passed since the launching of the Cooperative Movement in India, it has assumed a nationwide importance only during the last decade. The object of writing a thesis on "The Cooperative Movement in India" is to trace the reasons why the movement was almost static till the beginning of the Second World War, to examine in detail the comparative working of various types of cooperatives in different parts of the country during the last decade and at present and to suggest future lines of development to make the movement a success and the country a COOPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH with active State and public support.

It is an established fact that Cooperation has not achieved what was expected from it by its early enthusiastic advocates. But this should not in any way despair the workers in the movement, official or non-official since the achievements cannot be considered falling far short of expectations if we consider them against the background of extreme poverty, illiteracy, lack of business knowledge and experience and the complexity of Indian social conditions.

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An analysis of the reasons of the comparative failure of the movement in the past will be a pointer to the right direction for future action avoiding the repetition of past errors and consolidating whatever is achieved. Many attempts were made in the past by State Governments to examine the working of the cooperative movement in Provinces and States by appointing Cooperative Inquiry Committees and recently by the Government of India by appointing Agricultural Finance Sub-Committee, the Cooperative Planning Committee and the Rural Banking Enquiry Committee. Since last ten years the Reserve Bank of India has taken keen interest in the working of the Cooperative Movement in India and has published a series of bulletins, Reviews of the Cooperative Movement in India and Statistical Statements relating to the Cooperative Movement in India - giving very useful information on all aspects of cooperation not only in India but also in other countries. Over and above these, the factual material available from the Annual Reports on the working of cooperative societies published by various State Cooperative Departments contain some valuable observations useful to the analyst of the movement.

The information available as at present in the form of published literature to make a study of the cooperative movement in India is comprehensive enough to tax the capacity of the analyst who has to sift the significant and valuable facts from a vast mass of
scattered literature. It is doubtful whether the workers in the movement possess the time and energy to pick up the necessary content from this plenteous material.

The partition of the country and the integration of the former Indian Native States into States' Unions have made it difficult to make a comparative study of the movement in different States and regions of prepartitioned period with the present. However, for future study and administrative convenience, the merger of areas into bigger units are a change for the better.

With the attainment of independence, the cooperative system has been recognised by the Government in India as a better alternative to other systems and is given encouragement in all possible ways. The movement has an important role to play in the national economy under an independent India and this is recognised more so by the Planning Commission's attaching greater importance to the cooperative way to increase national welfare.

Many are the limitations that one has to encounter while writing a thesis on a vast subject such as the Cooperative Movement in India. The most important contributing factors in the making of a thesis of this nature fall under three broad groups: personal investigation by visits to the cooperative institutions; discussions with those in the field and in Government Cooperative Departments either
in person or through correspondence and the material available from published literature, official and non-official. The results embodied in the thesis are a consequence of the employment of all the above tools of economic analysis.